CLOSE UP

Editor : K. MACPHERSON
Assistant Editors : BRYHER ; OSWELL BLAKESTON
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CLOSE UP

Vol. VIII No. 1 March, 1931

THE DINAMIC SQUARE

Suggestions in favour of new proportions for the cinematographic screen advanced in connection with the practical realisation of " wide film."

This article is based on the speech made by S. M. Eisenstein during a discussion on " Wide Film " in Relation to Motion Picture Production Technique at a meeting organised by the Technicians Branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, in conjunction with the Directors and Producers Branches, Fox Hills Studio, Hollywood, September 17th.

" It is possible that, at first glance, this article may seem too detailed or its subject not of sufficiently " profound " value, but it is my wish to point out the basic importance of this problem for every creative art director, director, and cameraman. And I appeal to them to take this problem as seriously as possible. For a shudder takes me when I think that, by not devoting enough attention to this problem, and permitting the standardisation of a new screen shape without the thorough weighing of all the pros and cons of the question, we risk paralysing once more, for years and years to come, our compositional efforts in new shapes as unfortunately chosen as those from which the practical realisation of the Wide Film and Wide Screen now seems to give us the opportunity of freeing ourselves."

S. M. E.

Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen of the Academy,—

I think this actual moment is one of the great historical moments in the pictorial development of the screen. At the moment when incorrect handling of sound is at the point of ruining the *pictorial* achievements of the screen—and we all know only too many examples where this actually has been done! —the arrival of the wide screen with its opportunities for a new screen shape throws us once more headlong into questions of purely spacial composition. And much more—it affords us the possibility of reviewing and reanalysing the whole aesthetic of pictorial composition in the cinema which for thirty years has been rendered inflexible by the inflexibility of the once and forever inflexible frame proportions of the screen.

Gee, it is a great day!

And the more tragical therefore appears the terrible enslavement of mind by traditionalisation and tradition that manifests itself on this happy occasion.

The card of invitation to this meeting bears the representation of three differently proportioned horizontal rectangles : 3 x 4 : 3 x 5 : 3 x 6, as suggestions for the proportions of the screen for wide film projection. They also represent the limits within which revolves the creative imagination of the screen reformers and the authors of the coming era of a new frame shape.

I do not desire to be exaggeratedly symbolic, nor rude, and compare the creeping rectangles of these proposed shapes to the creeping mentality of the film thereto reduced by the weight upon it of the commercial pressure of dollars, pounds, francs, or marks according to the locality in which the cinema happens to be suffering !

But I must point out that, in proposing these proportions for discussion, we only reinforce the fact that for thirty years we have been content to see excluded 50 per cent. of composition possibilities, in consequence of the *horizontal shape* of the frame.

By those excluded I mean all the possibilities of *vertical, upright composition.* And instead of using the opportunity afforded by the advent of wide film to break that loathsome upper part of the frame, which for thirty years—six years myself personally—has bent us and obliged us to a passive horizontalism, we are on the point of emphasising this horizontalism still more.

It is my purpose to defend the cause of this 50 per cent. of compositional possibilities exiled from the light of the screen. It is my desire to intone the hymn of the male, the strong, the virile, active, *vertical* composition !

I am not anxious to enter into the dark phallic and sexual ancestry of the vertical shape as symbol of growth, strength, or power. It would be too easy and possibly too offensive for many a delicate hearer !

But I do want to point out that the movement towards a vertical perception led our hairy ancestors on their way to a higher level. This vertical tendences can be traced in their biological, cultural, intellectual and industrial efforts and manifestations.

We started as worms creeping on our stomach. Then we ran horizontally for hundreds of years on our four legs. But we became something like mankind only from the moment when we hoisted ourselves onto our hind legs and assumed the vertical position.

Repeating the same process locally in the verticalisation of our facial angle too.

I cannot enter in detail nor is such entry necessary, into an outline of the whole influence of the biological and psychological revolution and shock sequential as result of that paramount change of attitude. Enough if we mention his activities. For long years man was shepherded in tribes on outspread endless fields, bound to the earth in an age-long bondage by the nature of the primitive plough. But he marked in vertical milestones each summit of his progress to a higher level of social, cultural, or intellectual development. The upright lingam of the mystic Indian knowledge of the olden time, the obelisks of the Egyptian astrologers, Trajan's column in-

carnating the political power of Imperial Rome, the cross of the new spirit brought in by Christianity. The high point of mediæval mystic knowledge bursting upright in the Gothic ogive arch and spire. Just as the era of exact mathematical knowledge shouts its paean in the sky with the Eiffel Tower! And introduces the huge skylines assailing the vault of amazed heaven with armies of skyscrapers and the infinite rows of smoking chimneys or trellissed oilpumps of our great industries. The endless trails of wandering waggons have heaped themselves upon one another to form the tower of a Times or Chrysler building. And the camp fire, once homely centre of the travellers' camp, has now paused to vomit its smoke from the unending heights of factory chimneys. . .

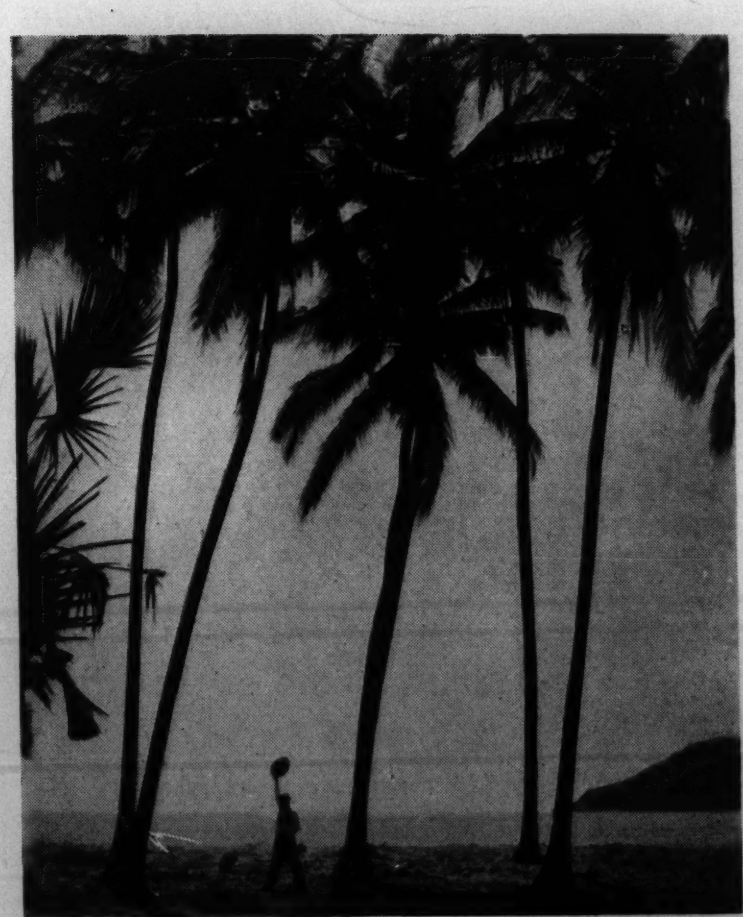
By now, surely, you will suppose that my suggestion for the optical frame of the supreme and most synthetic of all arts—the possibilities of all of which are included in the cinema notwithstanding the fact that it doesn't use them!—is that it must be vertical.

Not at all.

For in the heart of the super-industrialised American, or the busily self-industrialising Russian, there still remains a nostalgia of infinite horizons, of fields, of plains and deserts. Individual or nation attaining the height of mechanicalisation and yet marrying it to our peasant and farmer yesterday.

The nostalgia of "big trails," "fighting caravans," "covered waggons" and the endless breadth of "old man rivers". . .

This nostalgia cries out for horizontal space.



EISENSTEIN !

And on the other hand industrial culture too sometimes brings tribute to this " despised form." She throws the interminable Brooklyn Bridge to the left of Manhattan and attempts to surpass it by Hudson Bridge to the right. She expands without end the length of the body of poor *Puffing Billy* to that of the Southern Pacific locomotives of to-day. She lines up endless out-spread chains of human bodies (as a matter of fact—legs) in the innumerable rows of music-hall girls, and indeed what boundary is there to the other horizontal victories of the age of electricity and steel!

Just as, in contrast to her pantheistic horizontal tendencies, mother nature provides us at the edge of Death Valley or Majave Desert with the huge 300 feet height of the General Sherman and General Grant trees, and the other giant Sequoias, created (if we may believe the geography school books of every country) to serve as tunnels for coaches or motor cars to pass through their pierced feet. Just as, opposed to the infinite horizontal contredanse of the waves, at the edge of the ocean, we encounter the same element shot upright to the sky as geysers. Just as the crocodile basking extendedly in the sun is flanked by upright standing Giraffe in the company of the Ostrich and Flamingo—all three clamouring for a decent screen frame appropriate to their upright shape!

So neither the horizontal nor the vertical proportion of the screen *alone* is ideal for it.

Actuality, as we saw, in the forms of nature as in the forms of industry, and in the encounters together of these forms, we have the fight, the conflict of both tendencies. And the screen, as a faithful mirror, not only of conflicts emotional and tragic, but equally of conflicts psychological and optically spacial, must be an appropriate battle ground for the skirmishes of both these optical-by-view, but profoundly psychological-by-meaning space tendencies of the spectator.

What is it that, by readjustment can in equal degree be made the figure of both vertical and horizontal tendencies of a picture?

The battlefield for such a fight is easily found—*it is the square*—the space form of rectangle exemplifying the quality of equal length of its dominant axes.

The only and unique form equally fit by alternate suppression of right and left, or of up and down, to embrace all the multitude of expressive rectangles of the world. Or used as a whole to engrave itself by the " cosmic " imperturbability of its *squareness* in the psychology of the audience.

And this specially in a *dinamic* succession of *dimensions* from a tiny square in the centre to the all embracing of a full sized square of the whole screen!

The " dinamic " square screen, that is to say one providing in its dimensions the opportunity of impressing, in projection, with absolute grandeur every geometrically conceivable form of the picture limit.

From Eisenstein's latest film, shot in Mexico.

Le film le plus recent de Monsieur Eisenstein, tourné en Mexique.

Aus Mexico. Photos von Eisenstein's letztem Film.

(Note here 1: This means that dynamism of changeable proportion of the projected picture is accomplished by masking a part of the shape of the film square—the frame.

And Note here 2: This has nothing to do with the suggestion that the proportions 1:2 (3:6) give a "vertical possibility" in masking the right and the left to such an extent that the remaining area has the form of an upright standing strip. The *vertical spirit* can never thus be attained: 1st: because the occupied space comparative to the horizontal masked space will never be interpreted as something *axally opposed* to it, but always *as a part* of the latter, and 2nd: for, *never surpassing the height* that is bound to the horizontal dominant, it will never impress as an opposite space axis—the one of uprightness. That is why my suggestion of squareness puts the question in a quite new field nothwithstanding the fact that vari-typed masking has been used even in the dull proportions of the present standard film size, and even by myself.—First shot of Odessa-stair in *Potemkin*.)

No matter what the theoretic premises, only the square will provide us the real opportunity at last to give decent shots of so many things banished from the screen until to-day. Glimpses through winding mediæval streets or huge Gothic cathedrals overwhelming them. Or these replaced by minarets if the town portrayed should happen to be oriental. Decent shots of totem poles. The Paramount building in New York, Primo Carnera, or the profound and abysmal canyons of Wall Street in all their expressiveness —shots available to the cheapest magazine—yet exiled for thirty years from the screen.

So far for my form.

And I believe profoundly in the rightness of my statement because of the synthetic approach upon which its conclusions are based. Further, the warm reception of my statement encourages me to a certainty in the theoretic soundness of my argument.

But the lying form of the screen (so appropriate to its lying spirit!) has a host of refined and sophisticated defenders. There exists even a special and peculiar literature on these questions and we should leave our case incomplete did we not pass in critical review the arguments therein contained for the form it prefers.

Rio Papagayo, Guerrero, Mexico.

THE DINAMIC SQUARE.

II

The memorandum distributed to us before this meeting (attached to this discourse as appendix) and brilliantly compiled by Mr. Lester Cowan (assistant secretary of the Academy) provides a brief and objective survey of all that has been written regarding the proportions of the screen and in some of these writings share a preference for the horizontal frame.

Let us examine the arguments that have brought different authors from different sides and specialities, to the same, unanimously acclaimed . . . wrong suggestion.

The principle arguments are four :

Two from the dominion of aesthetics.

One physiological.

And one commercial.

Let us demolish them in the order quoted.

The two aesthetic arguments in favour of the horizontal shape of the screen are based on deductions deriving from traditions in the art forms of painting and stage practice. As such they should be eliminated from discussion even without being taken into consideration for the greatest errors invariably arise from the attempt to transplant practical results based upon the resemblance of the superficial appearances of one branch of art to those of another. (An entirely different practice is the discovery of similarity in *methods* and *principles* of different arts corresponding to the psychological phenomena identical and basic for all art perceptions—but the present superficially exposed *analogies,* as we shall see, are far from this !)

Indeed, from the methodological similarity of different arts it is our task to seek out the strictest differentiation in adapting and handling them according to the organic specifics typical for each. To enforce adoption of the laws organic to one art upon another is profoundly wrong. This practice has something of adultery in it. Like sleeping in another person's wife's bed. . .

But in this case the arguments in themselves bring so mistaken a suggestion from their own proper dominion that it is worth while considering them to demonstrate their falsity.

1. Lloyd A. Jones (No 9 on the list) discusses the various rectangular proportions employed in artistic composition and gives the result of a statistical study of the proportions of paintings. The results of his research seem to favour a ratio of base to altitude considerably larger than 1, and probably over 1.5.

A statement startling in itself. I don't repudiate the enormous statistical luggage that was doubtless at the disposal of Mr. Jones in enabling him to make so decisive a statement.

But as I set about summoning up my pictorial recollections gathered through all the museums that I have so lately visited during my rush through Europe and America, and recalling the heaps of graphic works and compositions studied during my work, it seems to me that there are exactly as many upright standing pictures as pictures disposed in horizontal line.

And everyone will agree with me.

The statistical paradox of Mr. Jones derives probably from an undue weight placed upon compositional proportions of the 19th century pre-impressionistic period—the worst period of painting—the " narrative " type of picture. Those second and third rate paintings, right off the progressive

highroad of painting development, and even to-day far surpassing in volume the new schools of painting, abundant even in the neighbourhood of Picasso and Leger as petty-bourgeois oleographs in most concierge offices of the world!

In this " narrative " group of painting the 1 :1.5 proportion is certainly predominant, but this fact is absolutely unreliable if considered from the point of view of pictorial composition. These proportions in themselves are " borrowed goods "—entirely unconnected with pictorial space organisation, which is a painting problem. These proportions are barefacedly borrowed—not to say stolen!—from . . . the stage.

The *stage composition* each of these pictures intentionally or unintentionally reproduces, a process in itself quite logical, since the pictures of this school are occupied not with pictorial problems but with " representing scenes "—a painting purpose even formulated in *stage* terms!

I mention the 19th century as specially abounding in this type of picture, but I do not wish to convey the impression that other periods are entirely lacking in them! Consider, for example, the Hogarth series *Marriage à la Mode*—satirically and scenically in their " represented " anecdotes a most thrilling series of pictures . . . and only.

It is remarkable that in another case, where the author of the painting was, practically and professionally, at the same time stage composer (or " art director " as we would say in Hollywood) this phenomenon has no place. I mean the case of the mediæval miniature. Authors of the tiniest filigree brushwork in the world, on the leaves of gilded bibles or livres d'heures (do not confound with hors d'œuvres!), they were at the same time architects of the various settings of the mysteries and miracles. (Thus Fouquet and an innumerable mass of artists whose names have been lost to posterity.) Here, where, owing to subject, we ought to have the closest reproduction of the aperture of the stage—we miss it. And find a freedom entirely void of such bounds. And why? Because at that time *the stage aperture did not exist*. The stage was then limited far off to right and left by Hell and Heaven, covered with frontally disposed parts of settings (the so-called mansions) with blue unlimited sky overshining them—like in many Passion Plays of to-day.

Thus we prove that the supposedly " predominant " and characteristic form of the painting by itself belongs properly to another branch of art.

And from the moment in which painting liberates itself by an impressionistic movement, turning to purely pictorial problems, it abolishes every form of apertura and establishes as example and ideal the framelessness of a Japanese impressionistic drawing. And, symbolic as it may be, it is the time to dawn for . . . photography. Which, extraordinary to remark, conserves in its later metempsychosis, the moving picture, certain (*vital* this time) traditions of this period of the maturity of one art (painting) and the infantilism of a following art (photography). Notice the relationship between Hokusai's

EISENSTEIN ! ALEXANDROFF ! TISSE !

100 Views of Fuji and so many camera shots made with the so pronounced tendency towards shooting two plans of depth—one through another (specially *Fuji seen through a cobweb* and *Fuji seen through the legs,* or Edgar Degas, whose startling series of compositions of women in the bath, modists and blanchisseuses, is the best school in which to acquire training ideas about space compositions within the limits of a frame—and about frame composition too, which, in these series, restlessly jumps from 1 :2 over 1 :1 to 2 :1).

This is, I think, the right point at which to quote one of Miles (1) arguments much more closely concerned with the pictorial element here discussed than with the physiological where it was intended to be placed. For Miles, " the whole thing (the inclination towards horizontal perception) is perhaps typified in the openings through which the human eye looks; this is characteristically much wider than it is high."

Let us suppose for a moment this argument to be true in itself, and we can even provide him with a brilliant example for his statement, one even " plus royaliste que le roi."—Still it won't help him !—But, by the way, the example is the typical shape of a typical Japanese landscape woodcut. This is the only type of standardised (not occasional) composition known, compositionally unlimited at the sides by the bounds of no frame, and typified in its vertical limit by a shaded narrow strip from lowest white to, at its topmost, darkest blue, rushing in this limited space through all the shades of this celestial colour.

This last phenomenon is explained as the impression of the shadow falling on the eye from the upper eyelid, caught by the supersensitive observation of the Japanese.

It might be presumed that, we have here, in this configuration the fullest pictorial testimony to the above view of Miles. But once more we must disappoint: in as much as the idea of a framed picture derives not from the limits of the view field of our eyes but from the fact of the usual framedness of the glimpse of nature we catch through the frame of the window or the door—or stage aperture as shown above—equally the composition of the Japanese derives from his lack of door frames, doors being replaced by the sliding panels of the walls of a typical Japanese house opening onto an infinite horizon.

But, even supposing that this shape represents the proportions of the view field, we must yet consider another remarkable phenomenon of Japanese art: the materialisation on paper of the above mentioned absence of side boundaries in the form of the horizontal *roll picture* born, only in Japan and China, and not ruling elsewhere. I would call it *unroll picture,* because unwound horizontally from one roll to another it shows interminable episodes of battles, festivals, processions. Example, the pride of the Boston Museum: the many feet long *Burning of the Palace of Yedo.* Or the immortal *Killing of the Bear in the Emperor's Garden* at Bloomsbury. Having created this unique type of horizontal picture out of the supposed horizontal tendency of perception, the Japanese, with their supersensitive artistic feeling, then created, illogical as it may be according to the view of Mr. Miles, *the opposite form*—as a matter of purely aesthetic need for counter-balance, for Japan (with China) is also the birthplace of the *vertical roll picture.* The tallest of all vertical compositions (if we disregard the Gothic vertical window compositions). Roll pictures are also found to take the form of curiously shaped coloured woodcuts of upright composition, with the most amazing compositional disposition of faces, dresses, background elements and stage attributes.

This, I hold, shows pretty clearly that even if the diagnosis of perception as horizontal should be correct (which should by no means be regarded as proved), vertical composition also is needed as harmonic counter-balance to it.

This tendency towards harmony, and perceptive equilibrium, is of a nature quite other than a different " harmonic " and " aesthetic " argument introduced by another group of defendants of the horizontal screen.

To quote Mr. Cowan's summary:

" Howell and Bubray (10), Lane (7), Westerberg (11), and Dieterich (8) agree that the most desirable proportions are those approximating 1.618 : 1, which correspond to those of the so-called " whirling square " rectangle (also known as the " golden cut "), based on the principles of dinamic symmetry which have predominated in the arts for centuries. For simplicity

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the ratio 5 :3 (which equals 1.667 :1), or 8.5 (equalling 1.6 :1) are generally advocated instead of 1.618 :1. . . "

" Predomination in the arts for centuries " should in itself be a cause for the profoundest suspicion when application is considered to an entirely and basically new form of art, such as the youngest art, the art of cinema.

Cinema is the first and only art based entirely on dynamic and speed phenomena, and yet *everlasting* as a cathedral or a temple; having, with the latter the characteristics of the static arts—i.e. the possibility of intrinsic existence by itself freed from the creative effort giving it birth (the theatre, the dance, music*—the only dynamic arts before the cinema, lacked this possibility, the quality of everlastingness independent of the art of accomplishing and by this means were characteristically distinguished from the contrasting group of static arts).

Why should a holy veneration for this mistaken " golden cut " persist if all the basic elements of this newcomer in art—the cinema— are entirely different, its premises being entirely different to those of all that has gone before?

Consider the two other denominations of the " golden cut," denominations expressive for the tendency of these proportions: the " whirling square," the principle of " dynamic symmetry."

~~They are~~ a *moan* of the static hopelessly longing towards dynamism. These proportions are probably those most fitted to give the maximum tension to the eye in causing it to follow one direction and then throw itself afterwards to follow the other.

But—have we not attained, by projection of our film on the screen, an, in actuality existing " whirling " square?

And have we not discovered in the principle of the rhythmical cutting of the strip an, in actuality existing " dynamic symmetry "?

A tendency practically attained and triumphantly materialised by the *cinema as a whole.* And therefore unnecessary to be advanced by the *screen shape.*

And why the hell should we drag behind us in these days of triumph the melancholy souvenir of the unaccomplished desire of the static rectangle striving to become dynamic?

Just as the moving picture is the tombstone of the futuristic effort of dynamism in the static painting.

There is no logical basis for conservation of this mystic worship of the " golden cut." We are far enough away from the Greeks who, in exaggeration of their extraordinary feeling for harmonic proportion used a proportion for their irrigation channels based upon some sacred harmonic formula, dictated by no practical consideration. (Or was that case one of war trenches? I don't remember exactly but I do remember that it was some

* The gramophone record, also a dynamic form made everlasting, has to be considered now as a part of the film.

practical enchanneling process determined by considerations purely abstract, aesthetic and unpractical.)

The imposition by force of these century-old proportions upon the month-young wide screen would be as illogical as was this Greek business. And, to finish with all this painting tradition *if* it be desired to establish the relationship of the screen frame to *something else,* why on earth not use for comparison the intermediary between painting and the moving picture—the postcard or the amateur photography?

Well, here we can insist that, at least in this field, justice is equally done to both tendencies!

By the mere fact that our pocket Kodak snaps with equal facility and accuracy whether vertical or horizontal shots of our kid, pa, ma or grandma, according to whether they are lying in the sunshine on the beach, or posing hand in hand in their wedding, silver wedding or golden wedding dresses!

The second aesthetic argument emerges from the domain of the theatre and musical show, and, as reproduced by Mr. Cowan, runs as follows:

" . . . another argument for wide film rests on the possibility inherent in sound pictures which were lacking (were they really lacking???—S.E.) in the silent pictures on presenting entertainment more of the nature of the spoken drama of the stage." (Rayton (3)).

Conserving my usual politeness, I shall not say outright that this is the most terrific plague hanging over the talkie. I won't say it, I shall only think it, and shall confine myself to an observation with which every one must agree, viz., that the aesthetics and laws of composition of the sound film and talkie are far off from being established. And to argue at such a moment, from this most doubtful indication of the laws of development of talkies, to consider the present misuse of the talking screen as the basis for a suggestion that will bind us for the next 30 years to come to a proportion fitting that 30 months misuse of the screen, is, to say at least . . . presumptuous.

Instead of approaching the stage, the wide screen, in my view, should drag the cinema still further away from it, opening up for that magic force that is montage—an entirely new era of constructive possibilities.

But more of that later—as dessert.

The third distinctly formulated argument for horizontal proportion derives from the domain of physiology. It does not prevent it from being as wrong as those preceding. Dieterich (8) and Miles (1) have pointed out that the wider picture presents itself more accessively to the eye by virtue of the physiological properties of the latter. As Miles says:

" The eyes have one pair of muscles for moving them in the horizontal but two pairs for moving them in the vertical. Vertical movements are harder to make over a wide visual angle. As man has lived in his natural environment. he has usually been forced to perceive more objects arranged in the horizontal than in the vertical. (!!!—S.E.) This has apparently

established a very deep seated habit which operates throughout his visual perception. . . "

This argument sounds very plausible. But its plausibility in large degree disappears the moment our research glides from the surface of the face provided with its horizontally disposed perceptive eyes towards . . . the neck. Here we could paraphrase exactly the same quotation in the directly opposite sense. For here the mechanism of bending and lifting the head as opposed to its turning movement from right to left provides for exactly the opposite conditions of muscular effort. The lifting and bending of the head (vertical perception) is carried out just as easily as eye movement from left to right (horizontal perception). We see that also in this case, in the purely physiological means of perception, the Wisdom of Nature has provided us with compensatory movements tending to the same all-embracing square harmony. But that is not all.

My example, as well as my counter-example has established another phenomenon of the perceptive auditor: the phenomenon of *dynamism in perception.* In horizontal dimensions of the eyes and vertical of the head.

And this by itself overthrows another of Dieterich's (8) arguments:

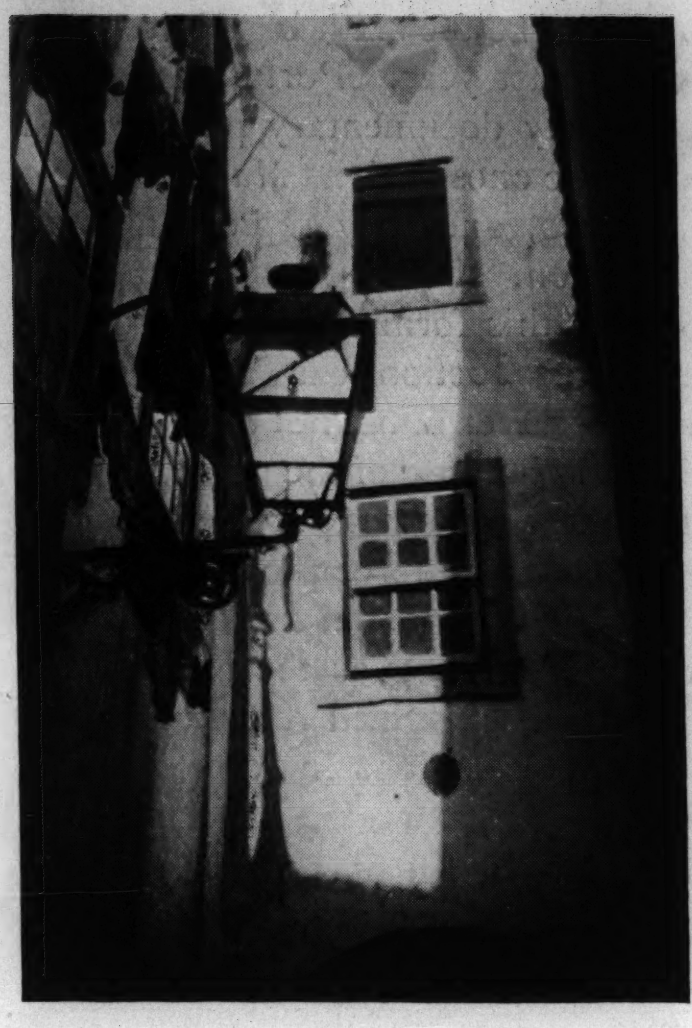
" On physiological grounds that the total field covered by the vision of both eyes (for fixed head position), and also the field comfortably covered by the vision of both eyes, both approximate, a 5 x 8 rectangular form, although the actual boundaries of these fields are somewhat irregular curves . . ."

For fixed head position . . . but the *unfixed* head position has just been established and that argument thereby loses its force.

(By the way, the only really insuperably bound and fixed position of the head in a movie theatre is when it is at rest . . . on one's sweetheart's shoulder. But we cannot pause for the consideration of such facts, notwithstanding that they concern at the very least 50 per cent. of the audience.)

(*To be continued.*)

SERGE EISENSTEIN.



From the Portuguese film, " Alfama."

Photo du film portugais " Alfama."

Aus dem portugiesischen Film " Alfama."

NOTES ON THE PORTUGUESE CINEMA

A new Portuguese film was shown in December : *A Vida do Soldado*, directed by Anibal Contreiras, a documentary record of the life of Portuguese recruits.

Each physically fit man is obliged to go into the army at the age of twenty. Men from the provinces have to leave their families, their homes and their fiancées and go to Lisbon to carry out their military service. Many of them in all their lives, have never before left their little native village and their arrival in the city, their first contacts with big buildings, large avenues, the enormous traffic, the cars that cross the streets with such speed in many directions, the traffic policemen, all give many opportunities for picturesque and " tragic " events. Some days later they begin life at the barracks and then the various exercises start that will continue for weeks and months until the end of their military service.

It is this life that is recounted in the film by Anibal Contreiras. But I did not care for it altogether because it was full of errors and a disjointedness of rhythm. It is well photographed and if certain of its scenes are good cinema and successful, the montage has little unity. Nevertheless, we must remember that this is the first important work for which Anibal Contreiras has been responsible, and in a future film no doubt many of the mistakes of this will disappear.

It is strange that *A Vida do Soldado* should be the sixth big Portuguese documentary film to be presented during the past year. Portuguese documentary films belong to two classes: the purely documentary picture such as *Alfama, Nazaret,* or *Lisboa,* and the romantic ones such as *Maria do Mar, Castelo das Berlengas* and *A Vida do Soldado,* and they represent up to now, the best of our cinematographic production.

Portuguese directors ought never to leave this form of cinema, for the following reason. Countries with a limited production can never throw themselves into cinematographic realisations of super films, not only because large sums of money are needed, but particularly because of the non-existence of good and suitably equipped studios. For these countries pure or romantic documentary films are ideally cinematographic forms to employ, and those that have the greatest guarantee of an artistic and commercial success.

Portugal gives a good example of this, for as long as the Portuguese *cineastes* wanted to copy foreign countries and make filmed romances, they only achieved a possible picture on two or three occasions in several years. Now that they have realised their mistake, good films become immeasurably greater, in number and in value.

I wrote in my article which appeared in the December issue of *Close Up,* about *Maria do Mar* and *Lisboa* and in this I have mentioned *A Vida do Soldado.* There is also *Alfama,* an extremely picturesque documentary film showing an ancient, historical and popular quarter of Lisbon. Its director was Joas de Sa. For several days he walked all over the quarter of Alfama, seizing with his camera all the beauty and picturesque life of the place; its narrow and tortuous streets and bye-lanes, that wind in all directions, ascending here to descend there, in order to climb again further on; its peculiar and long stair-streets; its old and irregular buildings with flowing verandas, and the daily activities of its inhabitants.

Joas de Sa never permits us to remain three minutes in the same place; his camera follows this way, turns to the left, returns, moves to the right, looks at the top of one house, stops here to let us see a splendid view above the river Tagus, climbs to the garrets of the houses to show us the street; from the street makes us look at the windows, catching here a girl hanging linen in the sun on a wire between two verandas, there an old woman on the third floor insulting another who stands down on the other side of the street. And the camera continues its exploration, begun in the early hours of the morning, to finish only when the sun disappears into the sea.

Alfama is not a long picture but it is marvellously photographed and made very carefully, with splendid artistic and cinematographic intuition. Among the Portuguese cinematographic and purely documentary films, *Alfama* is certainly the best.

ALVES COSTA.

Perpetua, a woman of the people, discovered by Leitão de Barros, and given an important rôle in his film, " Maria do Mar." She has played also in another Portuguese film, " A Vida do Soldado.

Perpetua, femme du peuple découverte par Leitão de Barros et à qui l'on a confié un rôle important dans " Maria do Mar." Elle a joué également dans une autre production portugaise, " A Vida do Soldado."

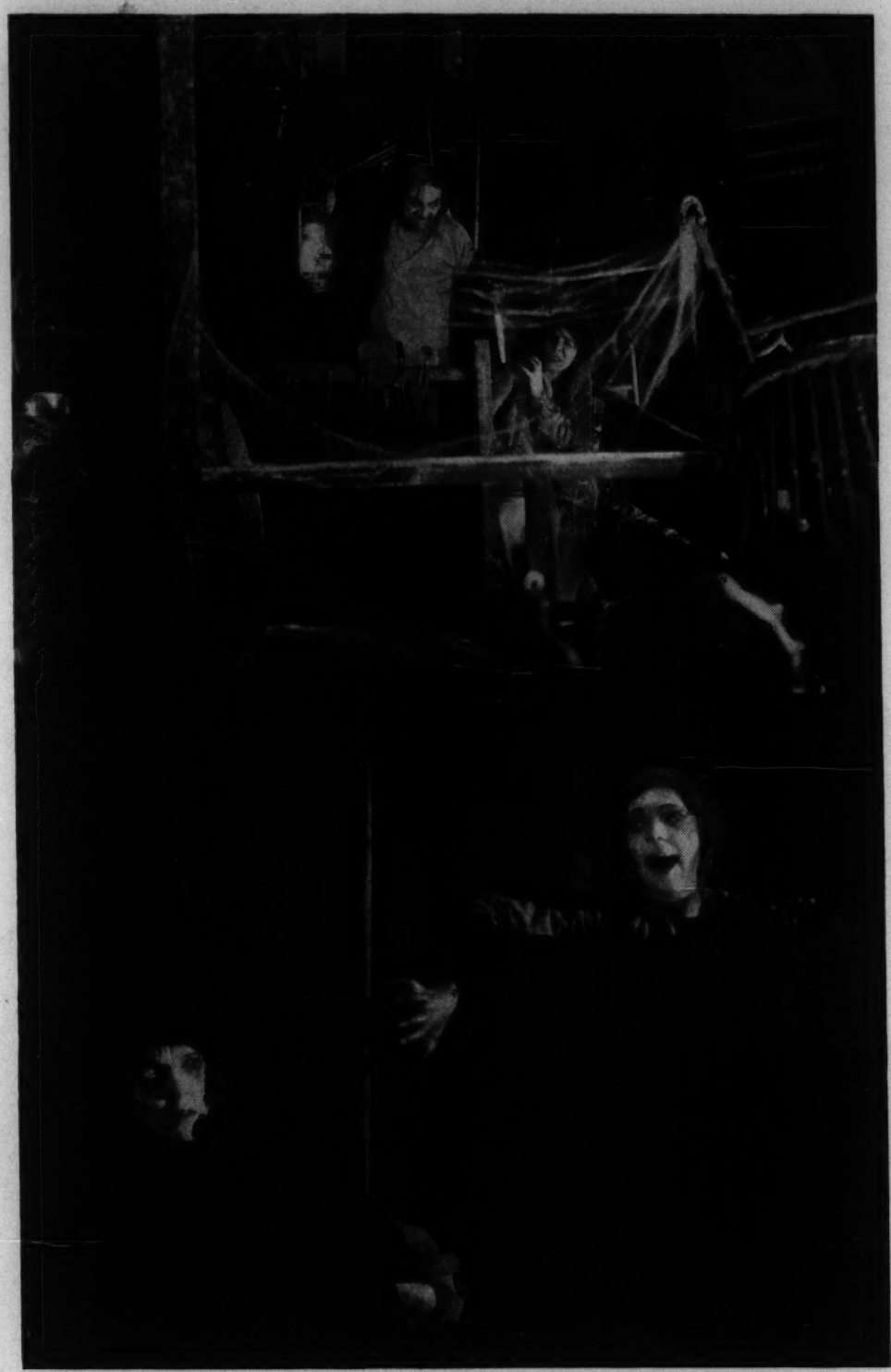
Perpetua, eine Frau aus dem Volke, die von Leitão de Barros, entdeckt wurde unde eine führende Rolle in seinem Film "Maria do Mar" erhielt. Sie spielte auch in einem anderen portugiesichen Film, " A Vida do Soldado."

A scene from the Portuguese film, " A Vida do Soldado " (The Soldier's Life), directed by Anibal Contreiras.

Une scène du film portugais "A Vida do Soldado" (Une vie de soldat), dirigé par Anibal Contreiras.

Eine Szene aus dem portugiesischen Film, " A Vida doSoldado" (Soldaten Leben). Regie: Anibal Contreiras.

PHOTOS BY COURTESY HERMAN G. WEINBERG



Two stills of scenes universally censored in " Greed," Erich von Stroheim's early masterpiece. None of the censored stills appearing in this issue have been previously published.

Deux extraits de scènes universellement censurées du premier chef-d'oeuvre de Erich von Stroheim, " Les Rapaces." Aucune de ces photos censurées n'a été publiée jusqu'ici.

Zwei Szenen aus " Gier," Erich von Stroheims frühem Meisterwerk, die zur Gänze von der Zensur gestrichen wurden. Keines der zensurierten Bilder, die in dieser Nummer erscheinen, ist jemals vorher veröffentlicht worden.

STILLS AND THEIR RELATION TO MODERN CINEMA

Rather playfully Silka said to me in Paris, " You talk of that picture, *Construire un Feu,* as if it were the latest novelty. Five years ago it was planned : two years ago it was finished. It took them a long time to find a cinema which would venture to put it on. Two years : or five years, because Claud Autant-Lara planned every shot in advance. Some of the drawings you can see in the lobby."

" So much," I answered, " for progress."

Construire un Feu was taken on normal stock. The Hypergonar stretched images, like a distorting mirror at a fair, so that more could be squeezed into the visual contents on the celluloid. In projecting one uses again the distorting mirror. The Hypergonar was employed, too, on the optical printer to place pictures of real action together with pictures of subjective action on the same film. Sometimes, parts of the celluloid were left blank to achieve new sizes of image outline. Parts which could be cut from black to white with amazing effect. . .

The hunter, out in the snow. Fire of twigs. The snow falls off a tree. Fire of twigs—gone! Matches gone. Tiny images cluster round the large . . . like . . . like grapes . . . like bees buzzing at the lattice of consciousness. Temperature 90 degrees below zero. Temperature 105 degrees below. No titles or sound. Swarms of image bees informing the shape of the principal image. Abstract thoughts, emotions, memories: the overtones and undertones pictured round the picture. A tale recalled of a fellow hunter who felled an ox and crawled inside the carcass after necessary adjustments. (No detail spared: these are thoughts of a simple hunter who has disembowelled many beasts.) The hunter thinks of his only companion, an alsatian. But the dog escapes in the tussle. The man thinks of those warmly in the hut, of hot soup turned by immense spoon. The dog (wedges of landscape) howls to the sky. . . Jack London's story, with one character, told in a new and vital image way. . .

What has this to do with stills? Stills and their relation to modern cinema. How?

Maybe this is the modern cinema part. The brilliant forecast by Claud Autant-Lara is not one of those highly charged reels which crackle when running through the projector. It is not electric flame, it is like . . . it is like a head of small flames turned in the darkness. (Oh! where now are the bees?) The images on the screen are panels, are spread (in rather sticky focus, it must be confessed) across the whole wall of the theatre; now tiny and single, now large and complex with thought expressions. . . If others had been as brave to face convention this is the form of film we might have been having for two or five years? Then stills would not have kept to 10 by 8. Alas, as so many highbrow producers, Mr. A-L. took no stills. (Some of the drawings you can see in the lobby.)

For art editors of film magazines it would have been a problem with white margins, heavy rules, spots and other salvations of page make up. Stills in strips, patches, groups, ovals: stills in immensity, stills in exact visibility!

I asked the opinion of a commercial still cameraman.

"In Hollywood," said Cyril Stanborough, "from 500 to 3,000 stills are taken for the exploitation of a super film. American publicists build up excitement, before the completion of a feature, by circularising thousands of attractive stills. Influential press critics are deluged with advance photos. A demand is created for a title. English supervisors deem 140 negatives an

ample allowance for one production. Things are different at the Twickenham Studios, but one large concern has been employing still cameramen at £3 10s. 0d. a week. Of course, English officials despise still workers because they do not get any publicity; not even on the trade synopsis, not even with the cigarettes by Abdullah and the gramophone by Columbia."

Mr. Stanborough seemed to be so worried about the present I had no chance to speak of the future, of oblong and oval, of great and little. However, I thought I might collect material for history-till-now (to borrow the expression of Mr. Paul Rotha).

"How," I demanded, "have the talkies affected the stills?"

The HOW, from Mr. Stanborough's viewpoint of production and never of innovation, is interesting.

Photo: Courtesy Herman G. Weinberg.

A wild party in "The Merry Widow," by Erich von Stroheim. Another exclusive still of a censored scene.

Une partie tapageuse, dans "La Veuve Joyeuse" de Erich von Stroheim. Autre photo exclusive d'un passage interdit.

Eine ausgelassene Gesellschaft aus "Die lustige Witwe" von Erich von Stroheim. Ein exclusiv-Photo einer zensurierten Szene.

"Stage folk, brought in to speak the new lines, are often tired on the floor after night work on the boards. Therefore, they sway in the stills."

I wanted to answer, "How ingenious of you to think of that first." Really, he was talking of his work, of everyday difficulties. That, unvarnished, is worth record.

"Before the silent cameras," he continued, "booths and lusty cables had to be shifted before the still camera could be put in position. By the time everything was ready the director was convinced that a whole library of stills had been taken. That is always the way, though. The director

From " The White Flame," a film by Charles Dekeukeleire.

Photo de " Flamme Blanche," un film de Charles Dekeukeleire.

Aus " Die Weisse Flamme." Ein Film von Charles Dekeukeleire.

Two scenes from "Greed," by
censored and never brought to the

Deux scènes de "Les Rapaces,"
furent censurées et ne parurent

Zwei Szenen aus "Gier" von
wurden und niemals zur Vor-

Photos : Courtesy of

is behind schedule. The still cameraman must *snatch* a few stills in the lunch hour. Artistes are tired; property-men, electricians and the rest are tired and bored and hungry and thirsty. Workmen, on nearby sets, produce excruciating noises. . ."

Ah! the troubles of a Mr. Stanborough may be over now that a new illuminant has been fitted to a reflex camera so that the release of the shutter sets off the flash which is noiseless and smokeless. The short exposure possible prevents blurring, "the extra flash of light being too brief to be recognisable by the eye." Although the professional still man is apt to miss the offering of fresh angles and be worried, when with a reflex, with the necessity of dodging reflectors, lamps and such like. He likes to stand on the holy ground where the kiné man stood. (Naturally for star-making, the still man should have his studio in which he can pose his portraits.)

It is too difficult to think for more paragraphs of stills as publicity. One would rather look at the stills and be done with them! Yet, stills can be, publicity stills can be, a record, a promise, a sharp thrill-stab. It is not earnestly required to know all that Manager X. at the Superb has done. One can pounce, at this point, on conclusions. That ordinary stills will continue to be used in the studio to help continuity of costume and the matching of lighting. That colour will trouble before stereoscopy. And that the ovals and panels will have to come FIRST from the avant-garde. (Already the still department is looked on with an economical eye—wastage in other departments being notorious; while Mr. Stanborough estimates that £80 will cover expenses of salary and material of his department for one film.)

Once John London asked me, "How would you get a character, were you writing such a scenario, from a country house to a night club?"

"I wouldn't," I replied. "I mean I wouldn't by rhyming mix and fade. I believe that the cinema has done something to time; given the right,

Erich von Stroheim, which were screen.

par Erich von Stroheim, qui jamais a l'écran.

Erich von Stroheim, die zensuriert führung gelangten.

Herman G. Weinberg.

to people and events, to exist at the same time."

Mr. Stanborough, once having been introduced, threatens to persist. Without rhyming mix or blush, nonetheless, let me turn to something else, to stills as the free picture show. (When the sun gets on them in the glass frames! The commercial printer who, for a microscopic fee, thuswise washes and fixes). . . .

Rich man, poor man, taxpayer. They stop. Except those in a scurry of fur-ends (with a parrot half across the English Riviera) with objects tightly held in. (They who scurry don't want entertainment on the bargain basement; they look to Olympus—for bargains!) Rich man, poor man, and, dashing for his label, CITIZEN; they pause.

How pleased to escape *morning* reality! (All those writers talk as if night was the only reality release.) Words wrung from a dish-cloth that has mopped the floor of last century's morality class. Those infinitely drab, hair-in-elastic-bands, workaday mornings. Pause to regather a hope in large pupils that mirror, apart from studio lamps, desire for the hands-above-below-on-hips hussy. Yesterday's game: the cards pinned to the velvet. Check: the moment he found her near the splish-splash fountain. MATE: the moment when the comedian pushed them both in: splatter-splish. Yesterday's game. Sitting in the dark of the theatre with somebody else—maybe! Time plunder. Bringing back (because this subconscious stuff DOES make life possible) what we would remember.

Those, too, who have not yet been to this film. Mr. Drooping Shoulders, Mr. Lost Moustache (Mr. Blooming Knowall, as the cockney ones say, only it does not fit in at all here, but it is pretty), Mr. Go-to-*Tit-Bits*-for-your-scenarios type, studying the attitude of an eccentric knock-about. SUDDENLY, solemnly raising his bowler hat and balancing it sideways on his head while straightening his back with pride at the humour.

(Thrifty souls using the glass as a mirror.)

The free picture show of to-day, of yesterday?

In the trade papers, the story that Western Electric has finished another talkie truck for Lyons, for Shell-Mex, the story that the Middlesex Educational Committee has arranged for talking pictures to form part of the curriculum in Middlesex schools. A realisation—Daylight Projection and Daylight Screen. Cinema managers, henceforth, will they provide a moving poster display instead of the frame of stills? A kind of trailer run in a continuous projector on a daylight screen. This week, next week and attractions coming shortly.

From "The Merry Widow," by Erich von Stroheim. One of the censored scenes, of which this is the only still known to have been published.

La seule photo qui ait été publiée, à notre connaissance, des scènes interdites de "La Veuve Joyeuse," de Erich von Stroheim.

Aus "Die lustige Witwe" von Erich von Stroheim. Diese Aufnahme einer der zensurierten Szenen ist unserem Wissen nach die einzige, die je veroffentlicht wurde.

Photo: Courtesy of Herman G. Weinberg.

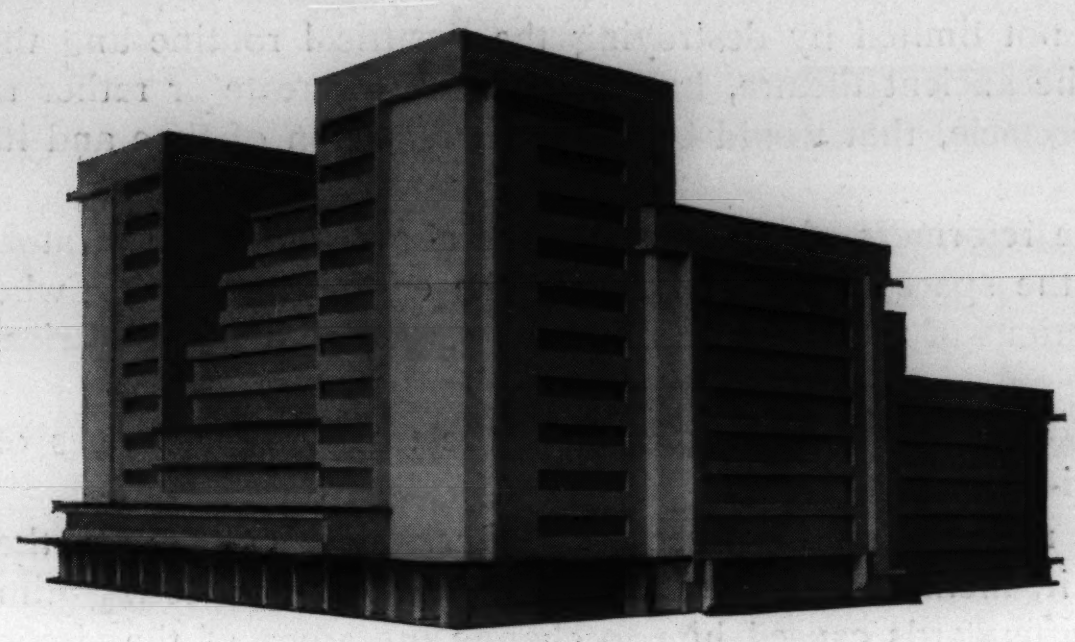
(Instead of stills, a screen given to audience reaction? There was that trailer for the Keaton film with the laughs of ten men, sitting in a private projection room, scrambled on the sound track. Noctovision could give close up inspection of audience members seated in total darkness. A little bitter for future victims but FUN and NOVELTY. Out-LIFE-cadging the Russian enthusiasts!)

So and so: lopping off pieces of red tape. Stills in newspapers; stills outside theatres.Trying to do the job. Trying to catalogue. Trying to order a review under the title, *Stills and their relation to Modern Cinema.* Finally, lopping off one more piece of red tape. Stills and the Compound Cinema.

What fraction of a compound cinema scheme could any still suggest? For example, the student or disciple (whichever it is one is allowed to be by Mr. Seldes) of the Compound Cinema would take the Daylight Screen as an excuse to fill the auditorium with Holophane lights. At the Richmond Cinema the Holophane automatic control provides six hundred and seventy two sequences of colour lighting effects. All the lighting effects may be pre-set on a control panel. Instantaneous "black-outs" can be obtained by colour master switches. Of that the compound cinema bloke ought to be able to make a fine *mental haggis!!*

At some stage one must give up: put away the red tape with the type ribbon.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.



View of the model.
Vue du modèle.
Ansicht des Modells.

THE THEATRE OF THE FUTURE AND THE TALKING FILM

The development of the theatre after the war is looking for a perfection of technique, whose supremacy in every respect is a singular characteristic sign of our time.

It is the technique that gives to modern life its mark and style.

It plays the part of a sort of modern Dionysus, which brings to light a new kind of performance: the cinema with its dynamic element, time, unlimited space and pathos of movement.

The theatre with its verbal ballast and its routine does not correspond any more to the spirit of our time and the spectator satiated by "word" is thirsting for dumbness and for visual impressions; he begins to abandon the theatre for the cinema. " If all the spectators of the cinema do not visit the theatre, almost all spectators of the theatre are visiting the cinema " as Cl. Berton says in his interesting meditations about the modern theatre. (*Nouvelles Littéraires* of September 8, 1928.)

The theatre, though having perceived the competition of the cinema, this new mystery of the masses, has not itself immediately rendered account of the necessity to modernise and transform the grinding equipage of Thespis to a multicylinder limousine. It began meanwhile to take into consideration " the visuality " brought by the film in spite of the objections of the traditionalists.

The technique in its triumphal march penetrates to the stage, a multitude of stage-managers is rising, which by experimental means is aiming to build "the theatrical spectacle."

Their role is not limited by destroying the theatrical routine and the artistic bases of the ancient theatre, but their aim is to create or rather to " establish " a spectacle, that would be the exact reflection of time and its best expression.

As help to the reformers of the theatre come above all; the decorator, as constructor of the space of the stage* and the engineer-architect, who creates new conceptions of the construction of the stage and of the theatrical building.

The theatrical art is tending to get rid of the troublesome frames of the traditional " tri-lateral stage-box."

Hate for this narrow and inconvenient " Guckkastenbühne," as the Germans baptised it, inclined Reinhardt to leave the theatre, directing him to the circus and afterwards caused him to change the arena of the circus for " the open air " theatre festivals of Salzbourg.

Meyerhold, who is known as an adversary of the traditional stage with its inseparable curtain, introduces his original stage-constructions in *Earth is Rearing* (*Ziemla dybom*) adaptation of Tretiakow according to Martinet's piece *The Night* played in Paris by *La Phalange Artistique*. Also in Ehrenburg's *Trust D.E.* and in Erdman's *Mandate,* but he is not satisfied with that, for notwithstanding the interesting results he has attained, he feels himself very hampered.

The eruptive talent of the stage manager Piscator is tending to obtain the full expression of the construction of the theatre by mounting on the ordinary stage 6—7 little stages in a vertical direction, which are tied in the centre by a screen, creating in this manner a continuous performance of almost complete acting.

As an example of such a composition of Piscator we can cite *Hoppla, wir leben* (Hoppla, we are living), a play of Toller, at the Theatre am Nollendorfplatz in Berlin.

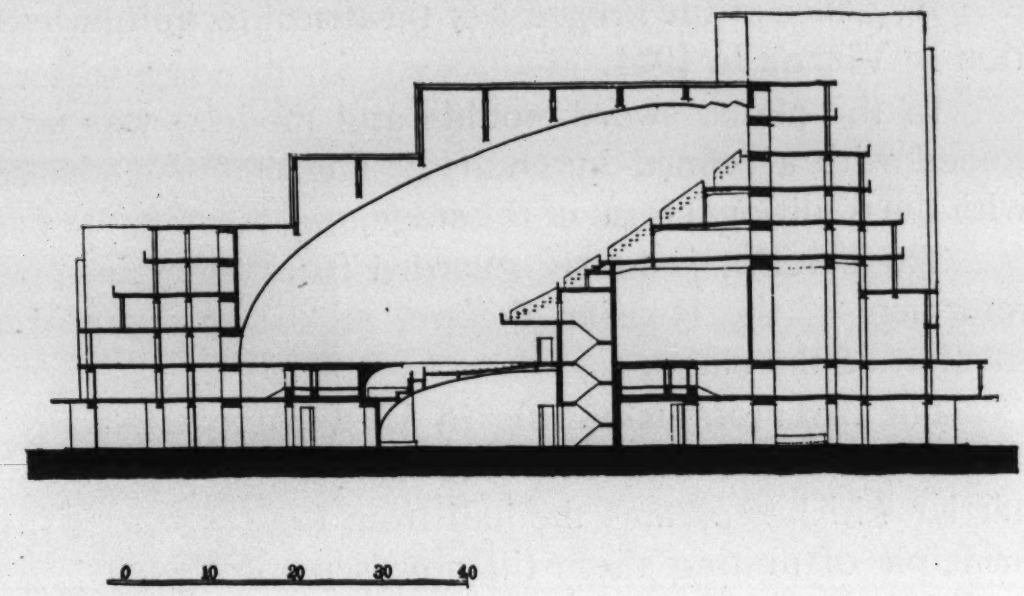
It was perhaps the largest possible exploitation of the traditional stage.

This method was already extremely used by L. Schiller, the stage-manager of the Polish Theatre in Warsaw, in Langer's *Periferies* and especially in the theatrical transcription of *History of a fault* by Stefan Zeromski in 42 pictures, which followed each other in an almost cinematographic rhythm.

The theatrical technique in the above mentioned gettings up, so characteristic in fundaments of the aspirations of the modern theatre, helped greatly the audacious conceptions of the stage-managers.

Invading the theatre at first timidly, the technique was unable to destroy the traditional stage, but soon throwing out a compromise and wishing to stand at the height of the artistic success of the reformers, it became a powerful element in the modern theatre.

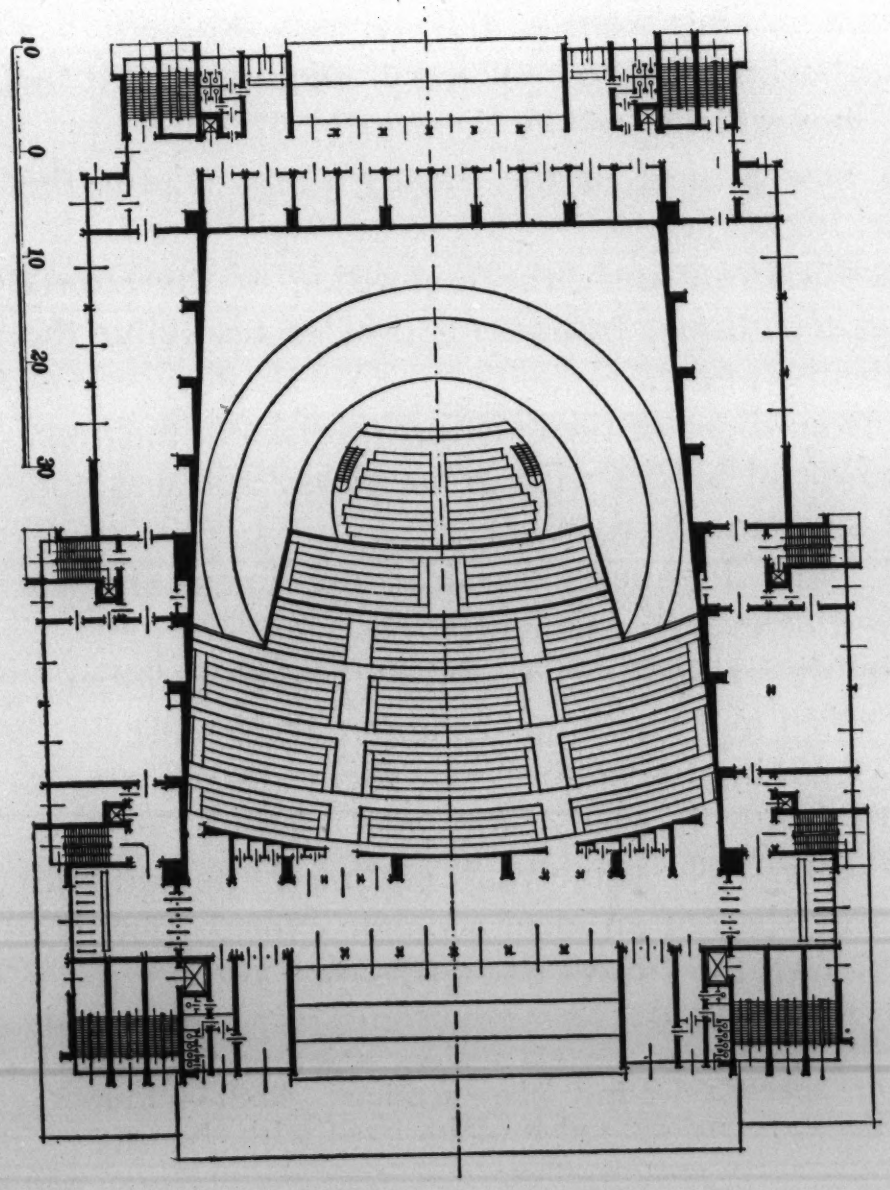
* So understand their role in the theatre: Schlepianoff and Popowa—the collaborators of Meyerhold, Wiesnin of Tairoff's Kamerny Theatre, also Rabinowich. In Poland—the brothers Pronaszko.



Section of theatre, showing plan of construction and acoustics.

Section du théâtre montrant le plan de construction et de l'accoustique.

Schnitt durch das Theater der den Plan der konstruktion und akustik zeigt.



Sectional diagram of theatre with auditorium and stage.

Diagramme sectionne du théatre avec auditorium et scène.

Skizze eines Schnittes durch das Theater mit Auditorium und Bühne.

Evidence of the progress of theatrical technique was found in the Exhibition in Vienna in 1924.

In the plans, sword-moulds and models, was struck a restless fantasy joined with a refined ingenuity. The essential characteristic was struggle with the traditional form of the stage, of the hall and of the theatrical building.

The curtain, jealously guarded for a long time, was suppressed by the reformers of the Russian theatre, at last this suppression provoked a distraction of the stage.

The inventors exhibiting in Vienna the sensational models don't introduce the curtain and they are tending to suppress the balustrade—this barrier which separates the hall from the stage, desiring in that way on the principle of uniting these till now separated parts, to efface the traditional limit between the stage and the hall.*

Thus in the " Railway theatre " of Kiesler the hall turns like a carousel round the " spacious stage " as in the model of Dr. Strnad where on the contrary we see the " circular " stage with the little stages surrounding the hall.

The stage is united completely with the hall.

These last years brought to theatrical building " Le Théâtre de l'Exposition des Arts Décoratifs " of the architects Perret and Granet a tripartite stage and the model of a theatre-circus of the German architect Gropius, who built especially for Piscatoı a moving arena with 3 stages.

These projects have been acknowledged as very advantageous for application of technique to the modernising of the theatre.

We have just heard of a new project of the theatre prepared for the painter Pronaszko and the architect Syrkus.

The aim of these inventors was not only the realisation of the efforts of the architecture of theatrical technique, but also a trial of resolving the essential problems of modern theatrical art.

This model differs greatly from those of the existing traditional theatres. It is composed plastically of powerful blocks with great glassy surfaces and leans against a construction of steel and ferro-concrete.

It approaches the Greek and Japanese classical specimens in its simplicity and harmony deprived of every ornament.

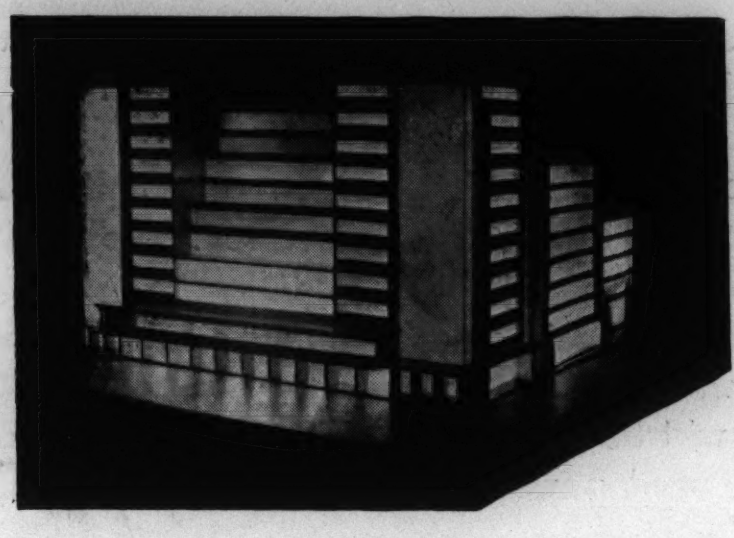
It will be magnificent in its dimensions: the total will take up a space of 8000 m^2., the front in height of 50 m., which makes about 12-15 storeys.

Many entrances, elevators, moving escalators will facilitate the access and the immediate exit from the theatre in case of fire.

The hall will contain 3,000 seats. The same vault embraces the hall and the stage, creating a sort of a large shell of an ideal acoustic effect. (Lyon's method realised in the construction of the Pleyel hall in Paris.)

* We can notice an analogy with the tendencies of modern painting that passes from the easel—to the painting of space rejecting the artificial limit — frames; and tending to create a totality with the surrounding and to unite itself with the exterior world.

But the creative invention of the authors was particularly revealed in this new theatre by the construction of its stage.



How the theatre will look by night.

Aspect nocturne futur du théâtre.

Wie das Theater bei Nach aussehen wird.

It is composed of a motionless proscenium under which is placed the orchestra and two moving stages, resembling circular rings.

The very large moving rings do not turn, like the moving stages, round their axle, but surround the hall and circulate in one or two directions, which can be regulated by the stage-manager according to his wish.

Before the eyes of spectators stands a large stage on which pass the above mentioned moving rings that may be able afterwards to disappear under the hall where the scenery is changed. In such a way one realises the continuity of acting.

If we take into consideration that these moving rings possess little circular stages and traps, we can understand the possibilities the constructors of this model gave to the stage-manager for exploiting the movement of actors, extras, scenery, in every possible manner.

The stage gives us the maximum of dynamism : the circulating movement of the rings in two directions, the turning movement of the little stages, which are placed on the rings and the vertical movement of many traps.

The spectator " spoiled " by the cinema is looking for satisfaction of his visual impressions, so by ingenious placing of many luminous centres we can exploit in the model of Messrs. Pronaszko and Syrkus the effect of light in the highest possible degree. Light will cease to be an " illumination " for the spectacle and create an " atmosphere " but it will begin to collaborate with the actor and will become the most powerful element of the theatre.*

When the efficient motors put in movement the rings and the projectors begin to illuminate, we shall obtain not only continuity of acting, but also speedy succession of pictures will resemble in its dynamism a

* The luminous performances of Studio Art et Action de Paris and pantomimes of Loie Fuller prove to what curious results we can attain operating with light.

film and the theatre which enthusiastic people speak of as something condemned to death will become a talkie, and besides a coloured three dimentional film.

This is the question. What stage-manager will be able to exploit the dynamism of the stage, its acoustic and luminous conditions and to tie in an artistic total this synchronic and simultaneous amalgam?

The rôle of a stage-manager becomes very complicated. His endeavour will be the co-ordination of the composition of the structure in space and time.

It is not to be feared that these technical accessories and all this refined machinery will strangle the living word in the theatre.

Theatrical pieces of the future will be preferred by the quality of words and not by their quantity, for we need powerful and striking words, not verbal torrent.

Visual impressions produced by a mighty theatrical technique will never eliminate the Word but they will underline its value, rejecting exaggerated loquacity.

The development of the theatre of the future is in the coordination of the Word with great visuality!

If the theatre, like the film is tending to grow rich by means of perfection of technique, there is no reason for seeing in this competition with the cinema, for in that case the film serves as an accessory to the theatre.

The perfected theatrical technique of Andre Pronaszko and Simon Syrkus precedes and goes beyond dramatical work. This technique has as its principle the putting of the dramatic work into competition and the opening of new ways and means to its development.

Messrs. Pronaszko and Syrkus desire to give a stimulus which will enable the dramatic work to awake from its sleep, caused partly by want of " possibilities " of the traditional stage.

This project of a new theatre does not lose connection with reality, as happened formerly, but it opens considerable ways and possibilities for the composition, gives famous perspectives to the realisers of future spectacles for the masses, for which it is in the first place designed.

Technique considered as an inspiring idea gives the key to the dramatic authors and to the stage-managers for solving new problems of theatrical art and in this finds its end, because by itself it is unable to regain the theatre: we must have a dramatical work that will enable its whole application.

ZYGMUNT TONECKI.

A scene from the Czech film, " Tonischka," directed by Karel Anton, and featuring Vera Baranovskaya.

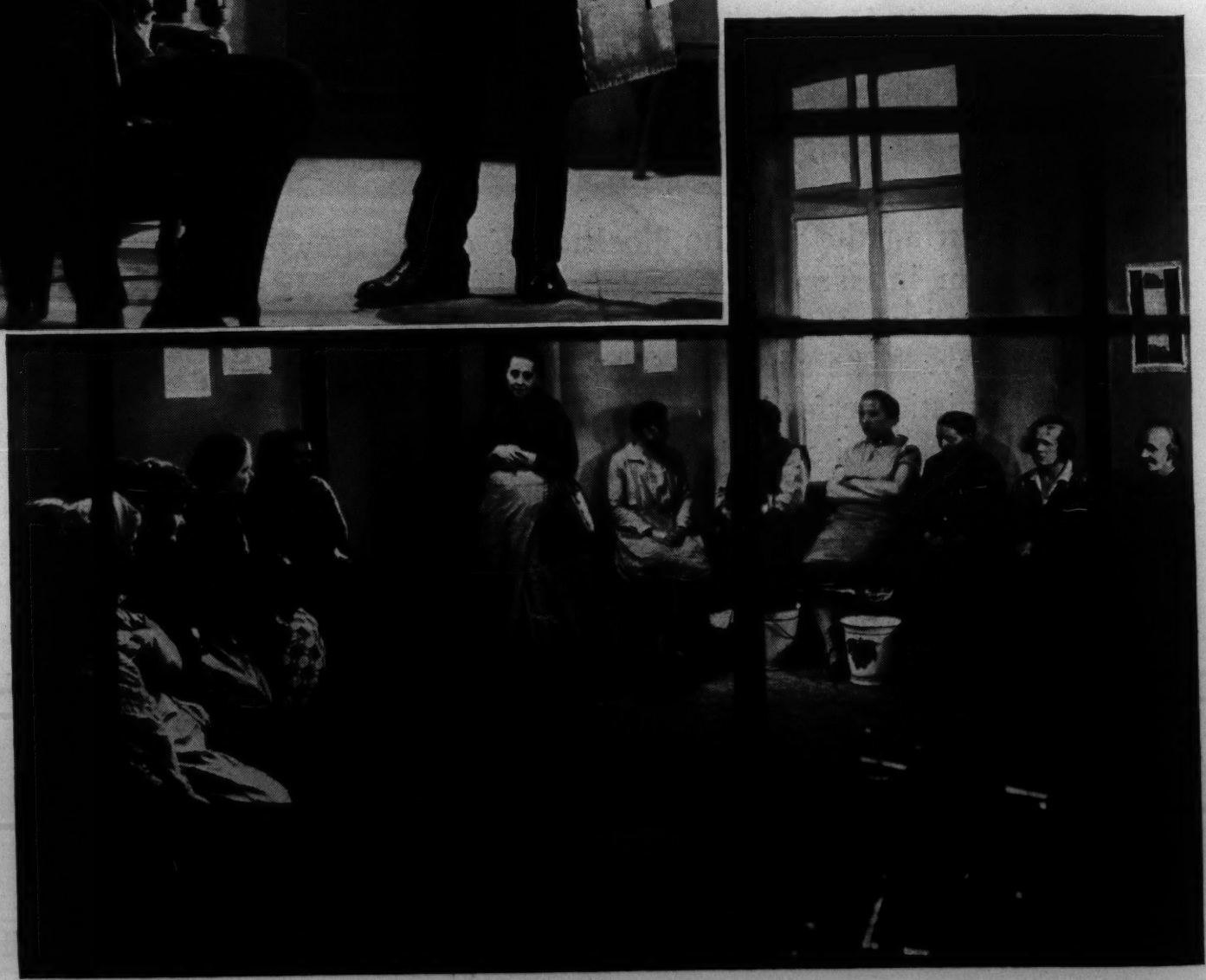
Une scène du film techèque " Tonischka," réalisé par Karel Anton, avec l'interprète Vera Baranovskaya.

Vera Baranovskaya in einer Szene aus dem tschechischen Film, " Tonishka. Regie : Karel Anton.

Vera Baranovskaya in " Such is Life."

Vera Baranovskaya, vedette de "C'est la vie."

Vera Baranovskaya in " So ist das Leben."



THE BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CZECH MOTION PICTURES

(The Story of a National Industry.)

It was the engineer Krizenecky who, in the year 1898, brought from Paris to Prague the Lumière camera and produced the first Czech pictures. From the historical point of view it is interesting to note that these Czech comedies (*Rendezvous at the Mill, The Hot-dog men and the Bill-sticker, Laughter and Tears*) were shown in Prague simultaneously with George Meliés' effort, *La Nuit Terrible,* which many consider the first motion picture comedy of all.

Czech pictures, then, have an honourable tradition. But, alas, the early beginning was abortive and, for the next fifteen years, the Czech motion picture industry came to a standstill. The first Czech producing company, *Kinofa,* founded in 1910, could not, therefore, compete with the rapid advance of American movies. However, the photography of *Kinofa's St. John's Streams* was, many years after its production, awarded the first prize at the International Kinematograph Exposition in Vienna.

The whole pre-war epoch of the Czech pictures is little more than an historical curiosity and the names of actors, from the legitimate stage, who then appeared before the camera, are not to be found in the Czech pictures of to-day.

During the war the blockade of central powers gave birth to a flourishing film industry in Germany and Austria. It was a pity that Bohemia produced no enterprising financier to act as godparent to a similar native industry. The success of the first Czech pictures was not due to technical and artistic perfection but to the atmosphere of the time, when the national feeling was at its height. All that was Czech was welcomed with open arms.

A few names, which then appeared in Czech pictures, are, to-day, still connected with the industry: A. Nedosinská, K. Degl, Dr. J. S. Kolár and Joseph Rovensky.

In the July of 1918, W. T. Binovec founded the *Wetebfilm*. Many of the pictures they produced were naïve; a few had a fair artistic quality. This company was, also, the first to establish a serviceable if imperfect studio. Suzanne Marwille. still a star in her own country, was the most talented of the *Wetebfilm* players.

Without experience, but with a great love for pictures, Vladimir Slavinsky made, in 1919, his début in film production.

The year 1920 saw the establishment of the *A-B Studio*. The name

is an abbreviation for the *American Film Company* and *Biografia*. The technical equipment was so poor that Dr. J. S. Kolár was forced to go to Berlin to make there his second picture, *The Song of Gold*.

Sidney Goldin, an American director, nearly put an end to the activities of the *A-B Studio* by directing a commercial and artistic flop, *On the Mountains*. Nevertheless, in the years 1920-1922 some 25 pictures were made; although the development was one of quantity rather than of quality.

Czech production literally died in 1923, a year of industrial crisis. Those who wished to remain in pictures were forced to go abroad.

The year 1925, however, again revealed a public demand for national pictures.

In 1926 Karel Lamac together with Theodor Pistek founded the other studio, *Kavalirka;* an adaptation of an exhibition pavilion. Their first picture was *The False Cat*.

Now, Czech directors had at their disposal two studios which, though not technically up-to-date, were sufficient encouragement for the production of average features. The year broke records: 39 pictures were passed to the censor. In the next two years only 31 pictures were produced; but these pictures *were beginning to find a foreign market*.

The famous *Erotikon,* which was screened all over Europe, was produced in 1929 by Gustav Machaty. The result was that 20 Czech pictures were exported to Germany in the same year. Czechoslovakia thus holding the second place in the scale of German film imports.

Two other great pictures were made at the end of 1929: *Colonel Svec* and *St. Wenceslaus* which received financial support from the Czechoslovak Government, costing about four million crowns. In spite of the fact that it was a patriotic picture, in which the well known Vera Baranovskaya appeared, *St. Wenceslaus* was not so successful as *Colonel Svec* in which the noble colonel sacrifices himself for the honour of his regiment.

Tonischka and *Life Goes That Way* were the silent pictures of 1930. Vera Baranovskaya played in both of them: in the first she was supported by Ita Rina from Yougoslavia and in the second by the Czech players, Theodor Pistek and Mána Zenisková.

At the beginning of 1930 the *A-B Studio* was equipped with sound apparatus. (Tobis.) The first Czech talkie was directed by F. Feher, *When the Strings are Weeping*. It was saved only by the excellent playing of the Czech violinist, Jaroslav Kocian. A talking comedy, though, proved a winner. A parody on the military system of the ancient Austrian Monarchy, it was produced by Karel Lamac with Vlasta Burian holding the title rôle in both the Czech and German versions.

S. Inneman produced a talkie, *Fidlovacka,* with the help of the Czech branch of *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer*. Karl Anton, the director of *Tonischka,* made the sound feature, *People in the Storm* with Hans Schlettow, Olga Tschekowa and Joseph Rovensky. This he followed with *The Case of Colonel Redl*; a talkie spy affair based on a novel by E. E. Kisch.

From the Czech nature picture, " Demanova " (the great stalactite cave in Slovakia), made by the cameraman V. Vitch under the direction of Ing. Brychta. An Electra journal production.

Photo tirée du documentaire tchèque, " Demanova " (intérieur d'une grotte de Slovaquie avec ses stalactites) tourné par l'opérateur V. Vitch sous la direction de Ing. Brychta. Production Electra journal.

Aus einem tschechischen Naturfilm " Demanova " (Die grosse Tròpfsteinhöhle in der Slovakei) aufgenommen von Kameramann V. Vitch unter der Regie von Ing. Brychta.

Vera Baranovskaya in the picture " Such is Life," made by Karl Junghans in Prague.

Vera Baranovskaya, dans " C'est la vie," tourné par Karel Junghans a Prague.

Vera Baranovskaya in dem Film " So ist das Leben " hergestellt von Karl Junghans in Prag.

For the coming year five Czech producing companies are preparing six talking pictures. The successful stage play, *Good Soldier Schweik,* will be turned into a talkie by *Gloria Films,* Mac Fric directing. S. Inneman has been assigned by *Sonorfilm* to direct *The Bag-piper of Strakonice. Gongfilm* announce *Janosik* and *Saturday* which is based on an original story by Gustav Machaty. *Oceanfilm* are at work on the picturisation of Jirásek's popular novel, *Psohlavci. Zdráhel-Film* announce *The Bartered Bride* in Czech, German and French versions.

These will be titles to note.

Recently a certain group of Czech film workers founded in Prague a motion picture co-operative society called *Cefid.* The chief aim of this society is to organise systematical production of Czech talking pictures and to demand financial and moral support of Czechoslovakian Government that a new studio should be erected in Prague on the grounds of the old silent studio, *Kavalirka.*

Czechoslovakian films have not yet said their last word.

KAREL SANTAR.

(We believe that Czech films, by their vigour and striking values of composition, may be the next to receive the enthusiasm recently given, by the cinematic world, to the early Russian epics. *Close Up* was the first to signal the importance of *Erotikon* and to review *The Jungle of a Great City* and *Tonischka.* Czechoslovakia and Portugal, do they stand for to-morrow?"—EDITOR)

From Pabst's new sound film, "Die Dreigroschen-Oper."

Photo de nouvel film sonore de Pabst, "L'Opéra quatre sous."

Aus Pabsts neuem Tonfilm, "Die Dreigroschen-Oper."

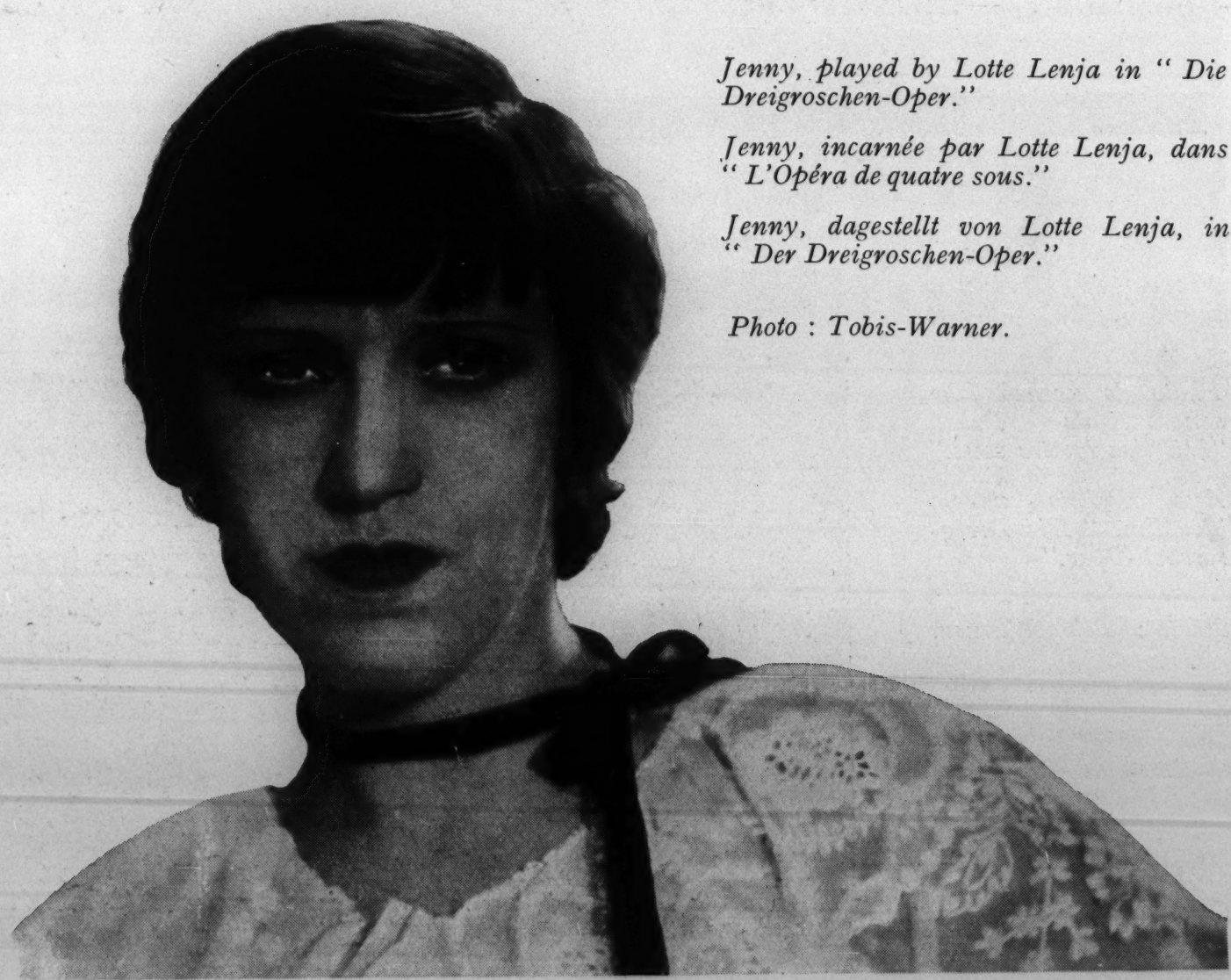
Photo : Tobis Warner.

EYE AND EAR IN THE THEATRE

If Cleopatra's nose had been shorter, says Pascal, the face of the world would have been changed; and a trifling peculiarity of the human eye, its constancy of vision, has made possible the whole art of the cinema, embodied in an industry of world dimensions which, in the United States, ranks fourth in magnitude.

The eye is so constructed that it holds the impression of a movement a fraction of a second after the movement has ceased. This inexactness of vision blurs the sharp edges of images of successive movements into a sequence of coalescing images, giving the appearance of continuous movement; and a similar impression of continuous movement can be produced by a series of pictures consecutively projected on a screen, such that each picture shows a slight displacement in composition as compared with its predecessor in correspondence with a slight advance in movement.

Were the eye perfect in its response there would be no films such as we know; and in real life the images received by the eye would resemble



Jenny, played by Lotte Lenja in "Die Dreigroschen-Oper."

Jenny, incarnée par Lotte Lenja, dans "L'Opéra de quatre sous."

Jenny, dagestellt von Lotte Lenja, in "Der Dreigroschen-Oper."

Photo : Tobis-Warner.

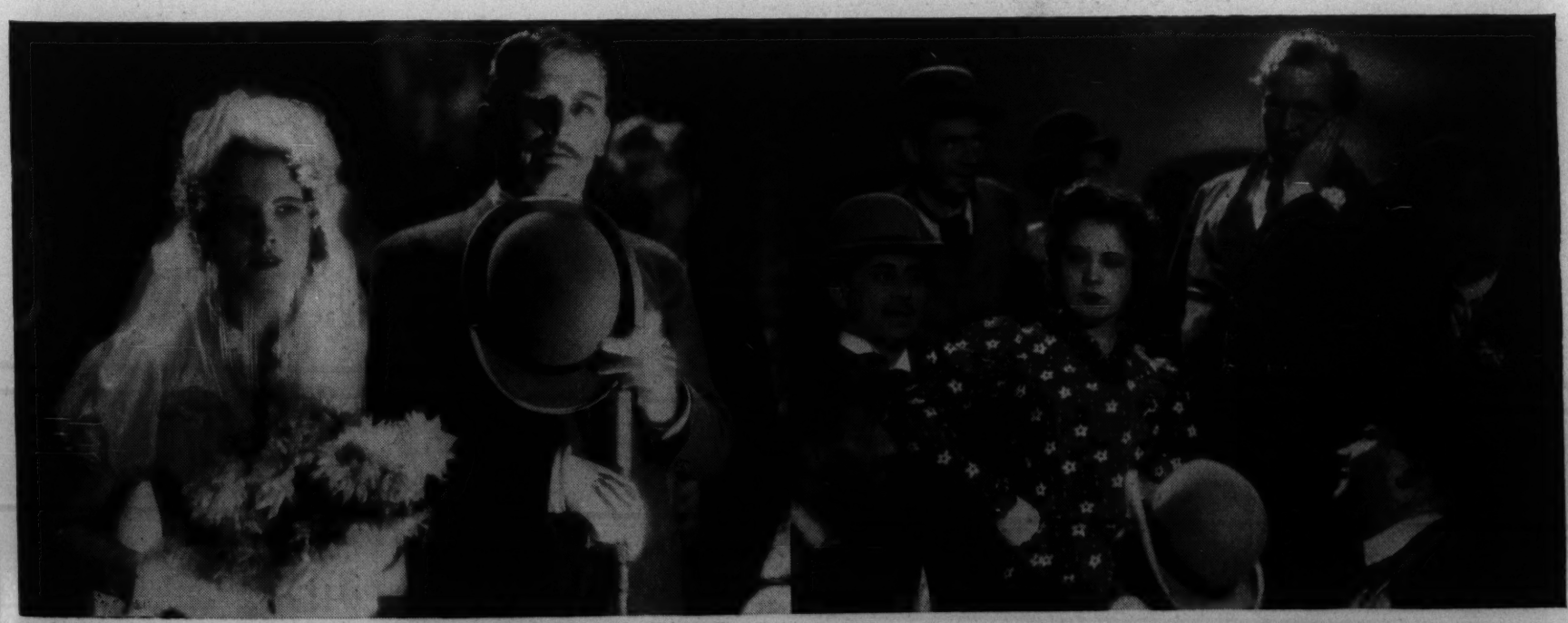
our impressions of slow-motion film pictures, quickened into the actual speed of movement.

The addition to the film of sound, colour and stereoscopy does not disturb the fundamental reliance of the film on this visual imperfection, which operates like the notes of a piano when sustained by means of the pedal; with this distinction, that each visual impression in succession is sustained involuntarily by the eye for a fraction of an instant, whereas on the piano a number of notes may be held simultaneously for as long as the executant desires. The constancy of sound available in the case of the piano arises in the act of producing the sound, and not in the response of the ear, which unlike that of the eye is instantaneous.

No difficulty is experienced in combining aural and visual impressions unless the common source is so distant, as in the case of lightning, that the difference in speed of travel between the waves of light and sound becomes appreciable. Thus there is no consciousness of the discordant responses of eye and ear in witnessing dramatic representations in the theatre, the opera house, or the cinema; where apprehension is gained by the activity of eye and ear alone, without the assistance of the organs of touch, taste and smell. Touch and taste, it is clear, cannot be invoked by the arts of drama, but no insuperable obstacle prevents at least the limited utilisation of smell;

Rudolf Forster and Carola Neher in " Die Dreigroschen-Oper," directed by G. W. Pabst.
Rudolf Forster et Carola Neher dans " L'Opera de quatre sous," réalisé par G. W. Pabst.
Rudolf Forster und Carola Neher in " Der Dreigroschen-Oper." Regie : G. W. Pabst.

Photos : Tobis Warner.



which in fact is promised—or should one say threatened?—by a new invention reported from America.

The introduction of smell in the cinema or theatre, even if successfully achieved, is unlikely to affect the essential dependence of dramatic representation on sight and hearing; a dependence which has always existed and which seems destined to prevail until thought transference becomes established as a means of communication.

The dramatic arts have by no means equally ministered to the eye and the ear: on the contrary, the balance has recurrently shifted, favouring now the eye and now the ear. And this varying emphasis derives special interest for us from the circumstance that such oscillations, due to dramatic applications of science, have been taking place in our very presence, so to speak; and are still, as scientific invention progresses, in the actual process of occurring.

In the earliest times, when the potentialities of hearing were imperfectly realised so long as human articulation was groping towards the sharp definition of speech, primitive drama, it is to be surmised, relied on the eye rather than on the ear. And in fact the oldest reputed type of drama, the ritual dance, was essentially a visual presentation; though it was doubtless accompanied by significant cries and by rudimentary music.

With the gradual differentiation of the first crude utterances into complicated verbal forms drama was enhanced by speech, in song and poetry and later in prose. Thus in ancient Greece the early dance and mime drama developed into the plays of Sophocles and Euripides, in which mime and movement were subordinated to language. This tendency of hearing to encroach on the domain of the visual has extended to the point of usurpation, as in the modern discussion play, which consists mainly of dialogue divorced from action; and music, an integral element in Athenian tragedy, has been ousted from modern drama into the limbo of entr'acte entertainment. In opera, of course, it is the music which is dominant, words and visible movement being of secondary importance.

While the mimetic art of the primitive dance was already beginning to lose sway on the Athenian stage, it still enjoyed pre-eminence in Greece in pantomime and puppet play; it was restored to favour in Rome, which delighted in spectacular entertainment; suffered in the general decay of drama in the first centuries of the Christian era; flourished anew in the medieval commedia dell' arte, the Italian comedy of masks; and in modern times has survived in isolated representatives such as the wordless play, *L'Enfant Prodigue,* and in such debased forms as the harlequinade of the children's pantomime, Punch and Judy, and the knock-about farce of the music-hall.

In quite recent times the visual element has been restored to the stage, in the spectacular productions of Max Reinhardt (who carried into effect the theories of Gordon Craig and Appia); and in the expressionist plays of Strindberg and his followers, who have re-introduced pantomime. Mime

Lotte Lenja as Jenny in a modernised edition of " The Beggar's Opera."
Lotte Lenja dans le rôle de Jenny, dans l'edition modernisée de " L'Opéra des Mendiants.'
Lotte Lenja als Jenny in " Der Dreigroschen-Oper."

Photo :Tobis Warner.

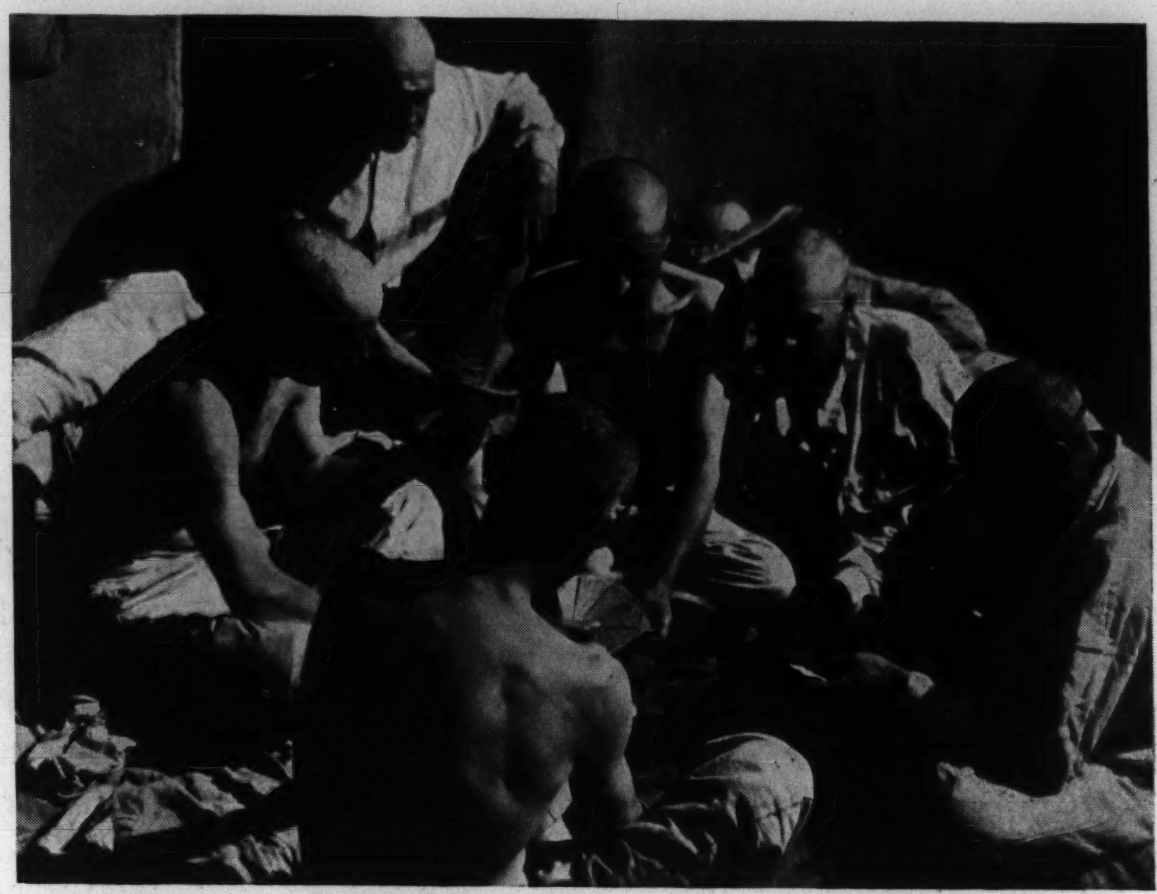
has gained a new lease of life in the Russian Ballet and in the film, both of which exalted the musical element and dispossessed speech. And now Diaghileff, who introduced the Russian Ballet in Western Europe, is dead and his talented company dispersed; and the pantomimic art of the cinema, for the time being at least, has been all but vanquished by speech in the all-conquering "talkie." Yet the film, as Mr. John Grierson (who directed *Drifters*) suggests, may provide a field of renewed activity for the marionette, which has indeed survived, but has latterly fallen on evil days; except in

The Negro ball in "La Petite Lise," a new film by Jean Grémillon.

Le bal nègre dans "La Petite Lise," nouveau film de Jean Grémillon.

Der Negerball aus "La Petite Lise," einem neuen Film von Jean Grémillon.

Photo : Pathé-Nathan.



" La Petite Lise," a film by Jean Grémillon.
" La Petite Lise," un film de Jean Grémillon.
" La Petite Lise," ein Film von Jean Grémillon.

Photo : Pathé Nathan.

Central Europe, where it has recaptured a remarkable measure of popular favour.

One form of drama, and that the most recent—radio drama—ministers solely to the ear. Owing its form to the special conditions of wireless broadcasting, it has no roots in history; unlike the film, which, equally a product of modern times, yet has a tradition going back to the earliest type of drama. Will radio drama succeed, like the silent film, in evolving its own artistic form? Or will a term be set to its struggle for self-expression by the consummation of television?

The issue is still in doubt, but already there are indications as to its outcome: the simultaneous sound and sight broadcasts of the British Broadcasting Corporation, the first of which took place only a few months ago; and similar developments in America, where a whole play, *The Queen's Messenger*, by J. Hartley Manners, was televised two years ago. Granted all their imperfections, these phenomena are portents of the time, perhaps not very distant, when in the wireless receiver, as in the cinema, spectacle and speech will once more be wedded and eye and ear be invoked together.

MARK SEGAL.

LA PETITE LISE

Jean Grémillon, the director of *Tour au Large, Maldone* and *Gardiens de Phare,* is already well known. His first talking film, *La Petite Lise,* has just been shown in Paris.

It is a good film; probably the first French talkie since *Sous Les Toits de Paris* that has not been an inept photograph of a still more stupid text or, as they call it now, dialogue.

Grémillon's rhythm is slow, there is sometimes a danger that the spectator will find it too slow, but the rhythm is there and it is one peculiar to Grémillon himself.

And this is so rare nowadays that I want others to share my enthusiasm. Grémillon proves that he knows how to direct, that he knows how to create emotion by extremely simple means, and that he has already understood a possible and intelligent alliance of sound and picture.

So if the film is not entirely satisfactory this is not wholly his fault but that of the scenario, which lacks exactitude of continuity. Sometimes (at the beginning and at the end) it is the drama of the father and then again it is the drama of *la petite Lise* herself.

The scenario is possible. A man who has killed his wife out of jealousy, returns from prison. He finds his daughter, Lise, in Paris, who has become a prostitute, for nobody has looked after her since her earliest childhood. As a result of circumstances for which she is not responsible, she kills a moneylender, from whom she had hoped to get enough money to buy a garage with her friend in order to build up a new life with him.

The father hears of the murder. He decides to take the guilt upon himself and to return to prison in order that his daughter may be happy.

Grémillon makes use of a concise and clever dialogue, that is often very emotional.

Nadia Sibirskaia is wonderful. This actress whose work has astonished us already in *Menilmontant,* has gained additional force through speech. Alcover is still too theatrical though the director's restraining influence has made itself felt here also, and Grémillon now should certainly not be left unemployed. With a little more experience, Grémillon would be one of the best European directors. How very few of them there are.

JEAN LENAUER.

Nadia Sibirskaya in "La Petite Lise," a new film by Jean Grémillon.

Nadia Sibirskaya dans "La Petite Lise," le nouveau film de Jean Grémillon.

Nadia Sibirskaya in "La Petite Lise," einem Film von Jean Grémillon.

Photo : Pathé Nathan.

EDUCATION AS A BY-PRODUCT

All things work together for good. As self-seeking commercial industry through its by-products has contributed to the benefit of art and medicine, so is education to become the gainer through a recently created by-product of the ephemeral Hollywood film.

To a large extent visual education has been deserving of the same comment that Mark Twain offered regarding the weather—" Everybody talks about it, but nobody does anything about it." Now, however, something is being done about it. Hollywood pictures, it has been discovered, contain a vast store of hitherto unrecognised pedagogic material, which needs only to be dug out and segregated to be turned to genuine usefulness. And this the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has undertaken to do.

Up to the present time the chief drawback to the employment of visual education has been the expense involved in making the type of motion pictures required for the purpose. While such organisations as the Eastman Teaching Films, and the Yale University Foundation which produced the *Chronicles of America* have pioneered with instructional pictures of the highest quality and value, the supply has been so limited and the cost so high, that comparatively few institutions have been benefited.

Yet all the while Hollywood has been turning out films which, despite the fact that they have been designed alone for the theatre, contain elements of definite value in the study of art, culture, history, literature, biography and other school subjects. Separated from the photoplay stories of which they form an incidental part, these elements are adaptable to classroom use as a most effective adjunct to textbook and lecture. Especially is this true of typical scenes of the life and customs of historical periods which have been reconstructed for the screen.

Aside from their prime utility as vivid, realistic presentments, these cinematic reproductions are fully as authentic as any customary textual descriptions and every whit as reliable as ordinary book illustrations, to say nothing of their immeasurable superiority in point of interest and impressiveness. No excuse or effort is spared by the producers in securing accuracy of detail in scenic and architectural background, as well as in costumes, manners and characterisation. Not only do the studios maintain thoroughly equipped research departments and libraries, but, also, in the making of any historical or " period " picture, specialists, scholars and authorities are called into consultation on each of the many and various details.

Whatever, therefore, may be the criticism of such pictures as photoplays, they are at all events as faithful to reality in their settings as money,

" The Strange Adventure of David Gray." A new film by Carl Dreyer.
" L'Etrange Aventure de David Gray." Un nouveau film de Carl Dreyer.
" Das seltsame Erlebnis des David Gray." Ein neuer Film von Carl Dreyer.

Photo : Film-Production Carl Dreyer.

intelligence and care can make them, so that their educational worth in this respect is at once as evident as it is emphatic.

Blinded for the time by the fictional romances dominating these films, as well as by the Hollywood personalities associated with them, and led astray, also, by the theatrical auspices under which the pictures have been presented, educators and advocates of visual instruction have failed to realize that much of the very material for which they have been seeking is already in existence and obtainable at a cost far below that which would be entailed in the special creating of it.

However, this realisation is now dawning upon them, and with it has come the conviction that thousands of feet of usuable and useful film are lying buried in the Hollywood vaults, merely awaiting resurrection and proper assemblage to make them available for the classroom.

When the project of thus turning such film to account was brought to the attention of the motion picture Academy, it was at once considered worthy of a trial. Under the sponsorship of the Academy's Committee on College Affairs an editing committee was chosen from local school officials, and the outcome of their initial endeavour has been the assembling of a film under the general title of *In the Days of Chivalry*. This consists of a total of 885 feet, comprising some thirty-five edited scenes or incidents from Douglas Fairbanks' eight-reel picture of *Robin Hood,* produced some ten years ago.

Already a large number of school and colleges throughout the country

have been supplied with prints of the film on a non-commercial rental basis. The film is designed specifically and exclusively for use in connection with regular classroom work. To this end no allusion is made to the names of the players enacting the rôles of the historic personages, nor is there any semblance of story or of dramatic development. The various scenes, as independent, representative pictures, are presented for the sole purpose of illustrating certain phases of medieval times, with especial reference to chivalry and to tournaments and the Crusades, while costumes, armour, accoutrements, architecture, castle life, social manners, and other incidental characteristic features and details are accentuated as pictorial aids to specialized study.

Accompanied by lecture and supplemented by discussion and collateral reading, this particular film as so far used has demonstrated not only its individual value, but also the complete practicability of the interesting venture which it represents. In view of this, therefore, we may shortly look for further films of the same kind, extracted from the refuse heap of Hollywood's outworn and discarded photoplays.

CLIFFORD HOWARD.

(NOTE.—It is interesting to remember *Conquest*.)

Carl Dreyer's new film has a fantastic story, drawing its inspiration from the world of superstition and mysticism. Rena Mandel as Gisèle.

Le scenario du nouveau film de Carl Dreyer puise son inspiration, fantastique, dans les thèmes de superstition et de mysticisme. Rena Mandel, dans le rôle de Gisèle.

Der Inhalt von Carl Dreyers neuem Film ist eine phantastische Geschichte aus der Welt des Aberglaubens und Mystizismus. Rena Mandel als Gisèle.

Photo : Film-Production Carl Dreyer.

" The Strange Adventure of David Gray." Carl Dreyer's new film, made without publicity during 1930 *in an old abandoned chateau. A silent and talking version have been prepared.*

" L'Etrange Aventure de David Gray." Le nouveau film que Carl Dreyer a tourné, sans battage préalable, durant l'année 1930, *dans un vieux château abandonné. Version parlante et non parlante.*

" Das seltsame Erlebnis des David Gray." Carl Dreyers Neuer Film der während des Jahres 1930 *fern von der Offentlichkeit in einem alten verlassenen Schloss gedreht wurde. Eine stumme und eine sprechende Fassung wurden hergestellt.*

Photo : Film-Production Carl Dreyer.

THE STRANGE ADVENTURE OF DAVID GRAY

Carl Dreyer, the famous Director of *The Passion of Joan of Arc,* has quietly staged another super film during the year 1930 : *The Strange Adventure of David Gray.* The film has been made by him for his own independent firm,* and is a fantastic story drawing its inspiration from the world of superstition and mysticism—an extraordinary sequence of events, seeming all the more strange from the fact that they take place in a modern milieu.

The atmosphere at once real and unreal, required by a film of this kind, could never have been created in a studio. That is why the scenery required for the film was sought for and found in nature. Nearly one half of the film had to be turned in an old deserted château : in the neighbourhood of Montargis an old château was discovered, in a dilapidated state and that had been uninhabited for many years. The director, the operator and the actors lived in that château for nearly two months. After a relentless search, everything required was found : the country-doctor's house, an inn by the river, an old water-mill, empty, deserted factories. Two large lorries transported from place to place the electric generating plant that supplied power in sufficient quantity for lighting indoors. There are more than 40 different settings in all to the film. Fifteen per cent. of the film takes place in the open air, the remainder indoors. The only scenery that had to be made up was a cemetery. It was Mr. Herman Warm, the architect, well-known for his work in connection with *Dr. Caligari* and *The Passion of Joan of Arc* who supervised the setting up of the scenery.

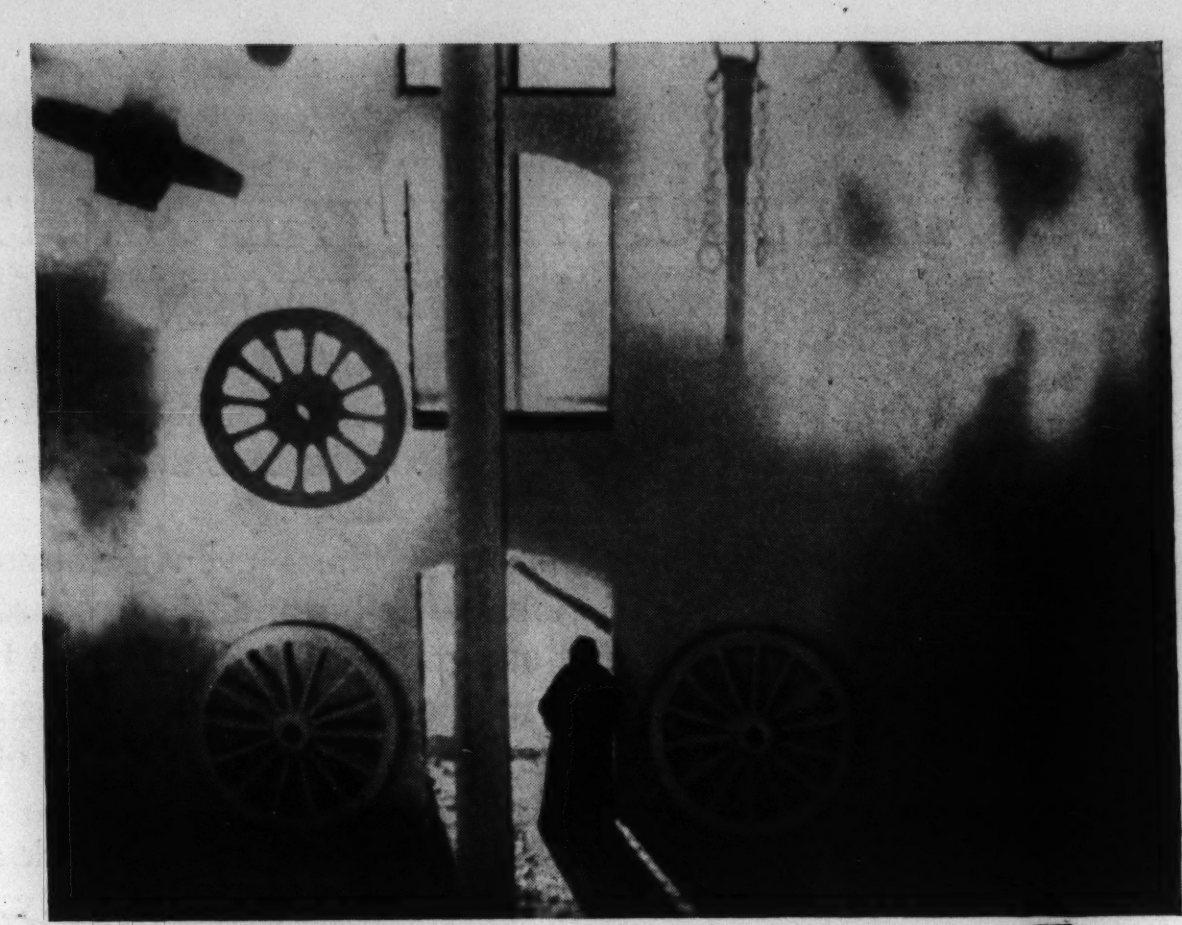
Mr. Rudolph Maté, Mr. Dreyer's collaborator of many years standing, whose remarkable photographs of faces in the *Joan of Arc* film, where no grease paint was used. are well remembered by all, has also photographed *The Strange Adventure of David Gray.* He has tried to get away as far as possible from the luminous and realistic photography of *Joan of Arc* and to create an atmosphere in keeping with the strange and eerie setting of the film, to work along lines in absolute contrast with those followed up to date.

The taking of the pictures began on the 1st April and ended in the month of October. The cutting of the film is at present in full swing.

Both a talking and a silent version have been prepared. As regards the talking version, which will shortly be ready for sonorising, the spoken texts have been recorded in three languages : French, English and German. Moreover, the film comprises but very few texts. The silent version has been prepared with the greatest care, so that it should not only be on a par with the talking version but also equal through its technical construction the best silent films of the period preceding the arrival of the talking film.

The photographs in this issue are direct enlargements from the negative of the film.

* Carl Dreyer Film-Production, 42, Quai du Point du Jour, Billancourt, s/Seine—Paris.



" The Strange Adventure of David Gray." The stills of this film are direct enlargements from negative. The photography is by Rudolf Maté, whose remarkable camera-work in " Joan of Arc " will not soon be forgotten. Julian West as David Gray.

" L'Etrange Aventure de David Gray." Les photos de ce film sont des agrandissements de négatifs. La photographie est de Rudolf Maté, dont la prise de vues excellente dans " Jeanne d'Arc " n'est pas près d'être oubliée. Julian West dans le rôle de David Gray.

" Das seltsame Erlebnis des David Gray." Die Photos aus diesem Film sind direkte Vergrösserungen von Negativen. Die Photographie wurde von Rudolf Maté besorgt, dessen bemerkenswerte Kameraarbeit in " Jeanne d'Arc " man nicht so bald vergennen wird. Julian West als David Gray.

Photo : Film-Production Carl Dreyer.

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The photographs in this issue are direct enlargements from the negative of the film.

* Carl Dreyer Film-Production, 42, Quai du Point du Jour, Billancourt, s/Seine—Paris.

" The Strange Adventure of David Gray." The stills of this film are direct enlargements from negative. The photography is by Rudolf Maté, whose remarkable camera-work in " Joan of Arc " will not soon be forgotten. Julian West as David Gray.

" L'Etrange Aventure de David Gray." Les photos de ce film sont des agrandissements de négatifs. La photographie est de Rudolf Maté, dont la prise de vues excellente dans " Jeanne d'Arc " n'est pas près d'être oubliée. Julian West dans le rôle de David Gray.

" Das seltsame Erlebnis des David Gray." Die Photos aus diesem Film sind direkte Vergrösserungen von Negativen. Die Photographie wurde von Rudolf Maté besorgt, dessen bemerkenswerte Kameraarbeit in " Jeanne d'Arc " man nicht so bald vergennen wird. Julian West als David Gray.

Photo : Film-Production Carl Dreyer.

THE FUTURE OF THE AMATEUR FILM MOVEMENT

What is to become of the amateur film movement?

Sound has brought it to the crossroads and there is no leader to point the way.

Obviously to produce sound films—even if they were intelligent and God forbid it if they weren't—is beyond the resources of most amateur societies. Is it, then, any use going on? If it is, and I doubt it, which road will they take—the hard way of experiment and originality or the easy descent of imitation, lingering in the pleasant valley of " let's-photograph-dear-grandmamma-on-the-lawn "?

Is it any use making films on sub-standard stock any longer? Have Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Metzner and the others really left us anything to do in silence? Apart, of course, from photographing drains upside down or getting new angles on kitchen sinks, which is no longer done in even the most advanced circles. (All Hollywood left us to do in silence, of course, is suffer. In talkies, even more so.)

It is a great pity that the Amateur Film League of Great Britain and Ireland died almost before it was born. Incidentally, I have never seen any reference in any film journal to its demise, which caused much heart burning in the breasts of the members of at least one society I know. Here, I think, is an appropriate place to mention it. I have been wanting to get it off my chest for a long time.

Club delegates to the first (and the last?) National Cine Convention held in London in October, 1929, unanimously decided to form the League with the object of unifying and co-ordinating the movement in the British Isles. What happened to their unanimity when they reached home is a mystery.

It was hoped, we were told in a circular, to place services at the disposal of clubs which would include a library for the interchange of films, a library of film books, an annual production competition, a technical bureau and other facilities.

Each society was asked to send a minimum donation of £2—" anything in excess would be gladly received and indeed welcome "—to set up a fund for working expenses.

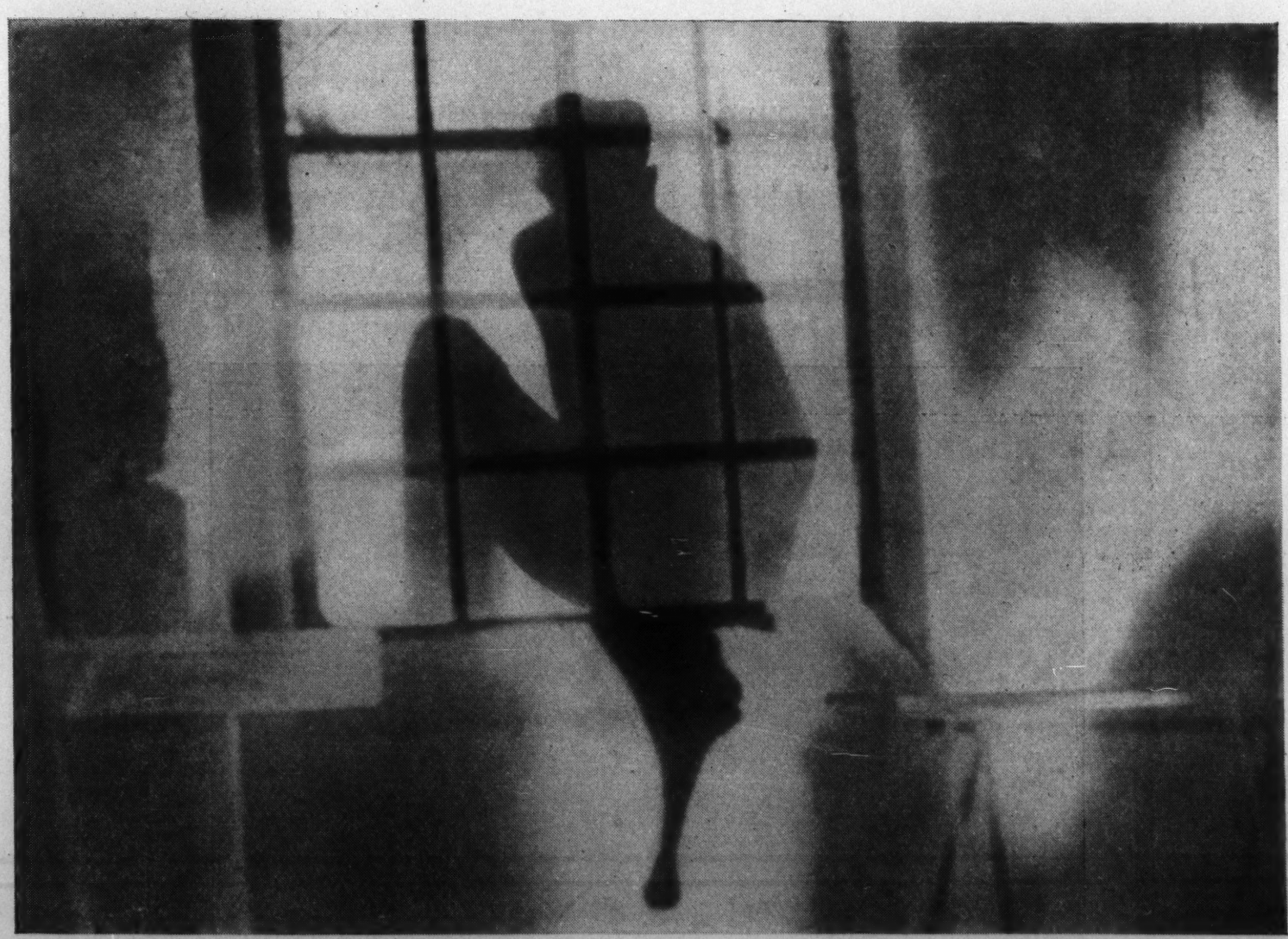
I was very enthusiastic about the scheme and persuaded the society with which I was then connected to send two pounds. Some of the members were against it because the Society had only just been formed and we were very short of funds.

The receipt of the two pounds was acknowledged and then for a long time we heard nothing. *Amateur Films* had been chosen as the official organ of the Central Body (and how it became a body !) and the first sign that all was not well came when that ceased publication.

We went on hoping, but heard nothing and finally, on the instructions of my society, I wrote the provisional secretary asking for information. He replied that he was afraid the League had died a sudden death, that the response to the appeal for donations had been very disappointing and that (he believed) the few pounds which were subscribed had been swallowed up in expenses.

He also gave me the address of the gentleman who had been elected chairman and I wrote twice to him asking for information, but I have never received any reply.

I do not know whether any other societies were similarly treated. If they were they have my sympathy. I was very sorry that the scheme had fallen through, but mingled with that sorrow was indignation at the way in which my society had been treated after responding to the limit of its resources.



" The Strange Adventure of David Gray."
" L'Etrange Aventure de David Gray."
" Das seltsame Erlebnis des David Gray."

Photo : Film-Production Carl Dreyer.

In view of this failure it is doubtful if any further steps will be taken in the near future to co-ordinate the activities of the many societies scattered throughout the British Isles.

The result is that they are leaderless, working independently of each other and more or less in the dark. In those circumstances how can they know whether they are progressing or marking time?

I wonder if these societies have solved the problem of social activities? Is their chief object seriously to make films in the hope of achieving something really worth while, or are they doing it just for the fun of the thing, so that the members can have a good time?

In my view nothing should be allowed to interfere with the serious business of a society. After all if one wants social recreation one does not join a film society, but a club.

Surely members should be enthusiastic enough about their work—and it should be looked on as work—without the aid of social intercourse. Or do they want dominoes and darts to absorb their superfluous energies?

I do not suggest of course, that things have reached such a pass, but no doubt many societies have had this problem to tackle and it seems to me that they are merely wasting their time if they do not concentrate on what should be their main function—to make films which contain the best that is in them all.

These two questions—sound and social—have put the movement in a peculiar position and between the two it seems unlikely that any work of real value will be done. I hope, however, that I am wrong.

LESLIE B. DUCKWORTH.

LE GARBO.

A typical décor by Meerson (art director for "Sous les Toits de Paris") from "Le Million."

Un décor caracteristique de Meerson (décorateur de "Sous les Toits de Paris"), utilisé dans "Le Million."

Eine typische Dekoration von Meerson (von dem auch die Dekorationen zu "Sous les Toits de Paris" stammen) aus "Le Million."

Photo : Films Sonores Tobis-Paris.

COMMISSION ON EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL FILMS

REPORT.

The Annual General Meeting of Representatives of Supporting Associations took place at Burlington House, in the Rooms of the Society of Antiquaries on November 28th, 1930, at 5 p.m.

The Report was divided as follows into five main sections, with subdivisions :

I.—*Preliminary Work.*

Under this heading were to be found summaries of the work carried out during this first year in connection with (1) Publicity, (2) Membership of the Commission, a matter which was discussed in detail later on in the proceedings. (3) Progress of the Appeal. It was reported that a grant had been made by the Carnegie Trustees, of the sum of £750 per annum for two years, on condition that an endeavour was made to obtain subscriptions to at least an equal amount from other bodies, and in June last a Deputation from the Commission was received by Sir Charles Trevelyan, President of the Board of Education, who showed the greatest sympathy and interest in the aims of the Commission. Further appeals for funds have been made subsequently and have met with an encouraging response. The need for funds became especially prominent during this year because of the necessity arising for obtaining permanent headquarters. (4) Offices, Staff, etc. Suitable premises were eventually found at 15, Taviton Street, and Mr. J. R. Orr, O.B.E., late Director of Education, Kenya Colony, appointed full-time Assistant Secretary. Before this time the British Institute of Adult Education generously lent their offices and the Royal Anthropological Society their Council Room for Meetings, etc., both of which Societies were duly thanked for their assistance.

II.—*Progress of Research Committees.*

Nine Meetings of the Commission have been held during the year, while each of the Research Committees meets monthly to deal with the subjects referred to it.

1. *Committee No. 1.* (*Adult Education.*)

(*a*) *An Exhibition of Mechanical Aids to Learning,* both visual and auditory was held at the London School of Economics last September. This was found to be of high value as a means of achieving wider publicity.

(*b*) *The Cinema and Public Libraries.*—The research carried on by Librarians of Public Libraries has shown the close relation between books asked for by readers and films publicly exhibited in any locality.

(*c*) *Information Concerning Film Craft.*—Instruction regarding the making of films has been given in many districts and lectures arranged to explain the technique of film craft.

(*d*) *The Cinema and Vocational Training.*—The Commission has endeavoured to co-operate with the industrial welfare societies with a view of making use of the Cinema in vocational guidance and in the training of young persons

(*e*) *Social Institutes.*—Appeals have been received from Welfare Committees for assistance in providing more suitable entertainment for young people than that which is usually available.

2. *Committee No. 2.* (*Children and Adolescents.*)

(*a*) Research undertaken by this Committee has been carried out to obtain a census of schools possessing projectors of any kind.

(*b*) Investigation of the Report of the Film Committee of the British Association on the principles governing the use of projectors in schools.

A short humorous scene in the police station, from "Le Million."

Une petite scène humoristique au commissariat de police, dans "Le Million."

Eine kurze, lustige Szene auf der Polizeiwache aus "Le Million."

Photo: Film Sonores Tobis-Paris.

(*c*) With the assistance of the Federation of the British Industries a list has been made of non-theatrical projectors suitable for use in schools.

An animated discussion took place in connection with this paragraph, upon the difficulties of obtaining projectors suitable for use in School Buildings, the exceptionally high rate of insurance of school buildings where projectors were used or about to be used, and the use of non-inflammable films. Several speakers made suggestions upon these points, that the Government be approached to make a grant towards insurance premiums, or for the prohibition of all films except those which were guaranteed non-inflammable. Opposition was here raised and it was shown that this proposal would substantially limit the number of films that would be thus procurable for the use in schools, which would be undesirable in the opinion of the speaker. Reply was made that professional research was at present being carried on to discover better and cheaper methods of production of non-inflammable film and of ways in which films originally made on ordinary film could be transferred to non-inflammable kinds for educational purposes.

(*d*) *Educational Films.*—A list of 200 educational films had been compiled by the Secretary of the Imperial Institute and is available upon application to the office of the Commission.

(*e*) *Training in Cinematography.*—Short vacation courses for teachers in cinema technique were being discussed, including the handling of projectors and films.

(*f*) *Experimental Work in Schools*, was providing supplementary evidence as to the value of the film as an adjunct to former methods of teaching. It was announced by Mr. Hoare, that in order to facilitate this work, the Western Electric Company had offered two portable sets, and the British

Congratulations! A scene from "Le Million," in which one can scent the typical René Clair manner.

Felicitations! Une scène tirée du film "Le Million," et qui est très caracteristique de la manière de René Clair.

Gluckwunsch! Eine Szene aus "Le Million," aus der man die typische Art René Clairs genau spüren kann.

Photo : Film sonores Tobis-Paris.

Movietone Company had arranged a special School Gazette to be placed at the disposal of the schools, together with a projector, which would not only show their own productions, but also those of other firms. The Secretary of the Middlesex Educational Committee had permitted experiments to be carried out in the schools throughout that County. The Ensign Company had also offered two projectors for educational experimental purposes.

(*g*) *Adaptation of School Buildings.*—The Commission have invited Local Educational Authorities to consider in the place of new schools or reconstructed buildings the provision of electric wiring and other structural arrangements for the safe projection of films.

3. *Committee No. 3. (Film Production and Technique, Distribution and Circulation.)*

This section covered matter that also appeared in the reports of other Committees, i.e. the endeavour to establish closer relations between the film producing industry and the teaching profession; the improvement of the non-inflammable film, type and cost of projectors, and the introduction of a larger proportion of cultural films into the programmes of the public Cinema theatres.

4. *Committee No. 4. (Foreign Relations and Documentary Films.)*

The paragraph describing the work of this Committee again aroused considerable discussion, concerning the problems of the Customs and importation of educational films from other countries. Again an official of the Commission reminded those present that by the Finance Act of 1924, it had been arranged that scientific films could be brought into this Country duty free, provided that application were made for their introduction by the Royal Society, who would undertake that the Society making the application were a scientific society and that the films were of an indubitable scientific character. It was therefore considered probable that education films could be obtained through the same channel, and that the Commission would be recognised by the Royal Society, by which means education or cultural films could be brought into this country readily and duty-free. It was suggested that a test case should be made. Mr. Whiteman, University of Agriculture, mentioned that films had been brought from Europe for use at the recent Poultry Convention without difficulty or expense. Another speaker gave the valuable information that a sub-committee of the League of Nations had been concerned with the same question of the exchange of Educational and Scientific Films, that a questionnaire had been circulated amongst all the countries most concerned, in which they were invited to give their views upon the subject. Should the general opinion be that the matter was of sufficient importance, it was probable that an international convention would be organised to deal with the subject in due course.

The Report also stated that the Colonial and India Office had shown willingness to co-operate, and that relations had been established with the International Institute of Educational Cinematography at Rome with a view to mutual assistance.

" The End of the World," a new film by Abel Gance, from a theme by Camille Flammarion.

" La Fin du Monde," un nouveau film d'abel Gance, d'après un thème imaginé par Camille Flammarion.

" Das Ende der Welt," ein neuer Film von Abel Gance, nach einem Thema von Camille Flammarion.

5. *Committee No. 5. (Science, Medicine and Public Health.)*

Enquiries have been directed to learned societies of all kinds concerning the present use of the film for scientic purposes, and co-operation has been effected with the British Social Hygiene Council, both in Great Britain and the tropics. It has been proposed that the Commission should assist with the formation of the proposed Imperial Film Library. The co-operation of the British Medical Society has also been sought.

III.—*Section III. Co-operation with Other Bodies.*

Of necessity, this section of the Report repeated much of the information already contained in previous sections.

The last business section of the Report was concerned with the appointment of Trustees, the subject of the resolution moved later by Mr. F. A. Hoare, to the effect, " That the Commission, in view of its increasing responsibilities be authorised to take steps for the provision of a constitution and the application for Trustees." The speaker pointed out that the present Commission, the existing members of which were re-elected at the present meeting, were in the nature of a temporary body, with an experimental function, but now, after demonstration of the interest in its aims and the generous financial support its appeal has aroused, there seemed an imperative necessity for the establishment of a permanent national body to carry on the work. The motion was put to the vote and carried unanimously.

Immediately before this motion Mr. Cameron presented the following resolution :—that the Members of the Commission be reappointed for the ensuing year, and be authorised to co-opt such additional members as may be found desirable. Following upon this motion, Mr. Macpherson, of the British Medical Association, asked for the original terms of reference regarding the inception of the Commission and appointment of its Members or Representatives. This was given by the Secretary, and then Miss Dawes, of the Head Mistresses Association, asked whether the additional members who were to be co-opted to carry on the work, were to be drawn from the associations already represented, or from other societies at present without any representation on the Commission, because her own association was at present without representation The reply was that the additional members would be of all kinds, also independent members would be welcomed who had special knowledge or ability to place at the disposal of the Commission.

This resolution was seconded by Mr. Keay, and carried unanimously; after which, votes of thanks was passed to the Carnegie Trust, Sir Benjamin Gott, for all the arduous work he had sustained in connection with his association with the Commission, as well as for presiding over this Meeting, and to all others, who had so generously supported the Commission in the strenuous and difficult work of its first year.

MARY CHADWICK.

MY FIRST SOUND FILM

In the beginning, the sound film dazzled and caught the public attention so much, that research and experiment into this new region, were quite forgotten. The mere fact of hearing voices from the screen, however uninteresting the sounds themselves were, sufficed to fill the imagination. Now all has been changed. Certain sounds recorded during an ordinary production of a news reel, add absolutely nothing to the value of the image, are too uniform. We are plunged into the already heard, into the least exciting of sound realism. It was as a remedy to this, to devote myself and to devote minds, to some experiments that I made, in utilising some sound and speaking trials of Paramount, *Le Monde en Parade*.

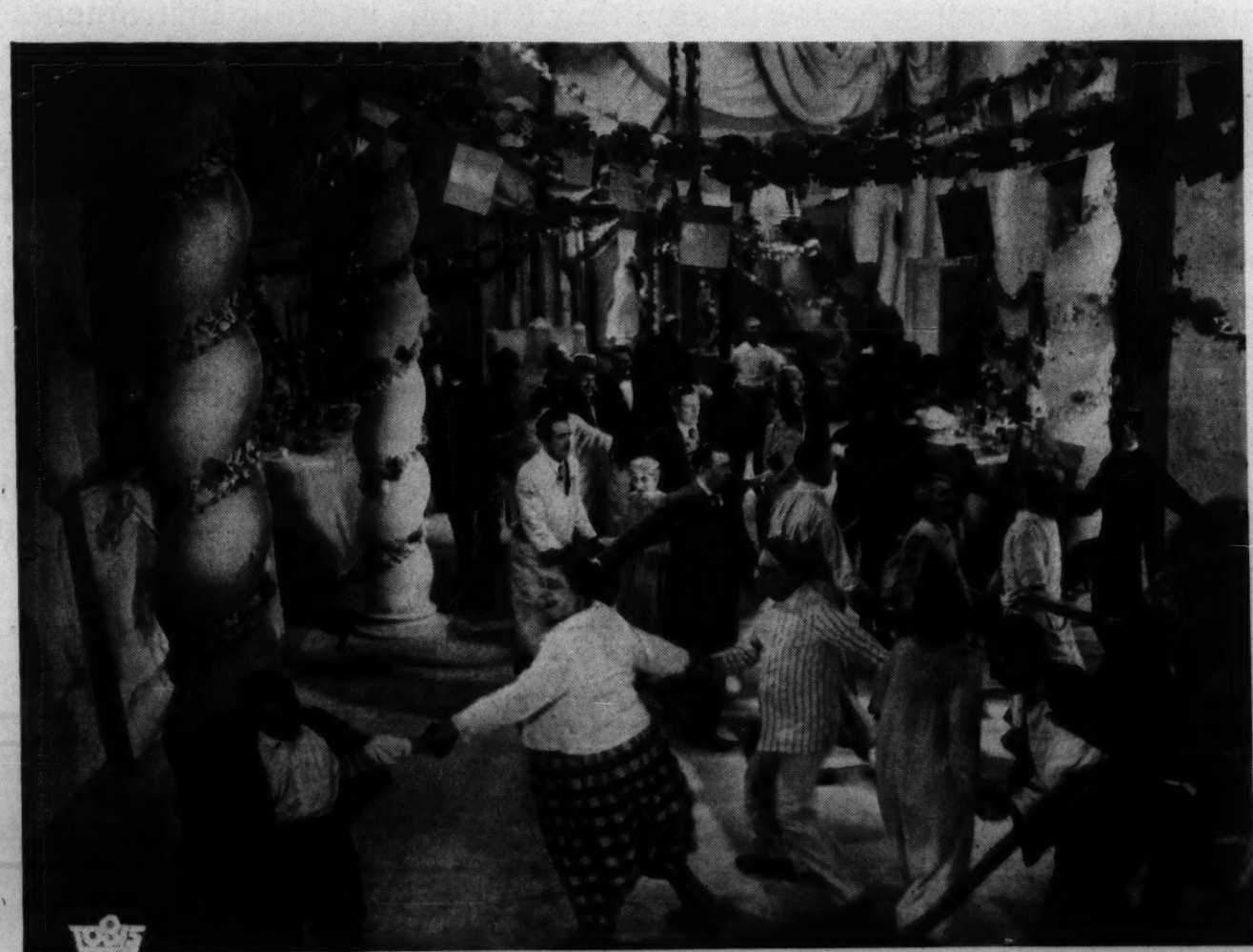
I wanted, in this film, to obtain a synthesis of noise and to change sound, which until now had been a simple matter of curiosity, into a lyrical or psychological factor. It was necessary to arrange sounds around images,

Celebrations in the studio of the painter, Michel (René Lefebvre), in " Le Million," a comedy from the original of Berr and Guillemaud. Scenario and direction : René Clair.

Réjouissances dans le studio du peintre Michel (René Lefebvre) dans " Le Million," comedie d'après l'original de Berr et Guillemaud. Scenario et direction : René Clair.

Feier im Atelier des Malers Michel (René Lefebvre) in " Le Million," einer Komödie nach dem Original von Berr und Guillemaud. Scenarios und Regie : René Clair.

Photos : Films Sonores Tobis-Paris.



not upon any realistic basis (a horse passes, and the sound of its hoofs is heard) but in prolongations, amplifications or complete change of the spectacle of life. For example: while aeroplanes are seen wheeling in the sky, in one dimension, one hears all the sounds these flying machines makes, from the most ordinary to the most extraordinary, from the most warlike to the most peaceable. The picture, thus, *means* far more than it shows: the visible acquires the value of a symbol, becomes a bomb charged with a thousand violent and terrible possibilities.

On the other hand, the replacing of the realistic accompaniment of visual *faits divers* by an appropriate passage of music, is in several instances imposed. Perhaps the music is to the real noises what the *Invitation au Voyage* of Baudelaire is to a Baedecker; and, myself, I cannot see how the Baedecker prose could give the *frisson* of travel-fever to a reader bent on travel. Equally, the use of silence is sometimes imposed. There are images which absolutely demand silence.

This silence in the cinema *sonore* corresponds well enough to immobility in the action of the silent film; sometimes it emphasises the importance of a following scene, sometimes it is calming, forcing regret on account of the sounds so brusquely brought to an end.

There is great difference between sound in real life and the same sound registered. Psychologically, we often hear only very few of the actual sounds whereas these same sounds registered by the well-known *mise en œuvre du hasard* is received entirely by the ears. Whence the fatigue.

At the same time, certain sounds captured by the microphone, give us a music that is much superior to anything that our existing instruments can furnish. Mr. Darius Milhaud wrote recently that we were suffering from veritably a musical crisis. Have not all our instruments been used to the full range of their possibilities? It may be that the sound film brings a solution to this difficulty. I had ten sounds extracted from my film projected to a friend who is a composer. He only recognised and identified three. He thought the others were the result of unknown and new musical instruments And there were no limits to his enthusiasm after the projection. "What marvellous perspectives for the art of to-morrow." I can still hear his phrase in my ears.

Le Monde will be presented in Paris in a new cinema on the Boulevards.

EUGENE DESLAW.

PRELUDE TO A CRITICISM OF THE MOVIES

Charlie Chaplin evades the o'er-reaching arm of the grotesque Keystone Kop, hurdling over the balcony, throwing a farewell kiss to the loved and lost one and beats it down the long street with his inimitable shambling gait accelerated into frenzied speed—hat, cane and shoes bobbing in fantastic

rhythm as the camera slowly irises out . . . this is the first manifestation of the American movie. Kaleidoscopically, reels and reels of unwinding film are projected on the white screen, reels of shambling hats, canes and shoes, fierce moustachios, pretty girls, vigilant " kops," villains, valets, varlets, drunks, society " dames," pugs, tramps, stray dogs, gypsies—scrambled together in the rhythm of a ballet set to sentimental mechanical music—these half-caricatures, these realistic phantoms, these grotesque exaggerations. . . Through all this senseless cruelty, this merciless opposition shambles the half-pathetic, half-humorous figure of the dapper little tramp who " apes " the swells and who with a twirl of his bamboo cane or a well-timed boot in the rear places them where they belong.

Buffetted, kicked-around, snubbed or disregarded, the little tramp, inarticulate and grotesque as a penguin, is a spectacle to be laughed at—so is a man falling down a flight of steps—at first it's funny, but there's something a little sad about it too. People are grown children who merely have lost the capacity to cry. If they cry at all, it will be with their heart at some mental torture or humiliation. Their sensitivity grows upon them in inverse ratio as their pre-adolescent unconcern dwindles and dies. The little tramp embodied by Chaplin is the sensitive human-being, full of vain conceits, pathetic endeavourings and bragadocio, withal still an amusing person, still a child of God. Human, all too human. . .

" In the beginning there was Chaplin. . ." so spoke Max Reinhardt once at a dinner in his honour in America which I attended. In Paris, in Berlin, London, Cape Town and Tokio, Chaplin is a universal figure, beloved, idolized, feted, known, remembered, recognised. What is recognised in him is the timeless symbol of the eternal roaming vagabond which we all become upon creeping out of adolescence even though we may be tied to hearth and home by family ties.

Maturity comes to people at different stages—to some early in life, to others, late. But what does maturity imply, before we go further? Nothing more than suddenly feeling one's self alone in the world, looking out over the horizon of the future and seeing only the ever present cloud which is the shadow of death waiting, waiting . . . all else is chance, conjecture, probability at best. There is no certainty—and often we are a little afraid. . . The little tramp snatches at happiness, crumbs of kindness are thrown him, crumbs of condescension and tolerance. But he knows the world—he knows men and women for what they are and not for what they generally pretend they are. Deep down in his mental make up is a rich sophistication, a fount from which he draws upon to mimic their absurd antics, throwing them into strong relief—out into the cold bare light, stripped and ashamed. . .

But when happiness comes to the little tramp he is bewildered, puzzled, frightened and then ecstatic. He knows not what to make of it at first because it may be too good to be true. (Here we have another peculiar, yet trenchant observation. In moments of greatest happiness, the urge is not nearly so much for laughter as it is for tears. Schopenhauer did not err in

stating that evil is the positive force and good the negative one in this world. Moments of happiness are merely reliefs from long periods of depression.)

The art of Chaplin is limned with overtones which keep shooting off the gross material. It is this which keeps his work perennially alive and which is charged with the breath of life. The Keystone Kops will always chase him—just as the cruel urgency of life will keep after us all allowing us no peace and little rest—but he is fleet of foot and will beat it down the street—we too will try to escape—until the camera " irises out ". . .

HERMAN G. WEINBERG.

THE NEW KINO

Among the prophecies the enemies of the U.S.S.R. have broadcast—the wish being father to the thought—is the collapse of the Soviet kino. Similarly the Russian theatre, a lively process well-nourished at the roots, has been foredoomed in the fantasies of the foe. This is the aesthetic counterpart to the political cry of the present régime. But the kino, like the Union, lives on and moves into several categories beyond the primitive level of the American film. Although the energies of the Russian economy are to-day concentrated on the programme of industrialisation and collectivisation, necessitating a great reduction, for the moment, of activity in the cinema, I have seen five new films which deserve attention and praise: a record of 100 per cent. And these films were not selected for me. I walked in upon them quite casually.

Perekop is the epic of the great struggle for the Isthmus joining Crimea to the mainland. It is an anniversary film. Ten years ago the Red Army drove out the white, Denikin and the hessians of the " self-determined " lands, Czecho-Slovakia, etc., subsidized by France, the marplot of Europe. The workers and peasants choked the neck of the bottle, and Denikin was cornered in the peninsula. As a film of commemoration and retrospect, *Perekop* belongs, thematically, in the second period of the dialectic Soviet film. We may divide the Soviet cinema into two general " eras ": pre-dialectic, and dialectic. The first is the *Polikushka* era, of the plight of the individual, a cinema un-informed by the critical, marxist point-of-view. In this era may also be placed the historical film about a personality—the German influence—such as *Czar Ivan the Terrible*.

The films *Potemkin* and *Mother* open the dialectic era, which contains three periods: pre-October, October and contingent strifes (military intervention), and re-construction or towards collectivism. *Perekop* is of the second period thematically, but structurally it is current in the present. That is to say, it derives its treatment from the new logic which has evolved from the basic first statement of the nature of the film as a process *built* from the frames of the negative imprinted by the various instruments: actor, object, light, etc. The kino is a process serving a process, in the U.S.S.R.

"A Firm Character." A Sojuzkino film, directed by Yursev.

"Un solide caractère." Un film Sojuzkino, dirigé par Yursev.

"Ein Fester Charakter." Ein Sojuzkino Film, geleitet von Yursev.

From an animated cartoon sequence made by Tsechanovsky for the sound film, " The Five Year Plan," by Alexander Room.
Fragment du dessin animé exécuté par Tsechanovsky pour " Le plan quinquennal," film sonore par Alexander Room.
Teil eines gezeichneten, beweglich folgenden Films, hergestellt von Tsechanovsky für den Sprechfilm, " Funfjähriger Plan," von Alexander Room.

In *Perekop,* Kalveridzé, a Georgian sculptor, utilizing the new logic articulated by Dovzhenko in *Arsenal,* has organized from dissociated frames an inter-relation at once social and structural. He has built a dramatic process re-enacting the intervention of the foreign powers and the counter-revolutionary attack of the kulak and the middle-class.

The film is not simply a picture of warfare. The physical struggle is set amid the conflict of class-interests, giving it its full social import. The film, in brief, is inferential and reflective, at the same time it is muscular in its battle-scenes. The relations between the battle and its class-nature are, when the fury of the battle is at its highest, not maintained as constantly as they might be. At such time the analytic logic of the structure is not re-rendered as a synthesis. A double failure is apprehended: the method is too intellectual for the muscular material, and the accumulative sense is injured. However, this is not a complete loss, for Kalveridzé balances it in part with a new sensitivity. Deriving from *A Fragment of an Empire,* shafts of light select details from the black arena. In *A Fragment of an Empire* these shafts were relatively static; in *Perekop* there is multiple play of light, moving columns and changing diagonals that etch and heighten the details, directing them incisively.

Perekop is an instance of the continuity of the Soviet kino. It shows

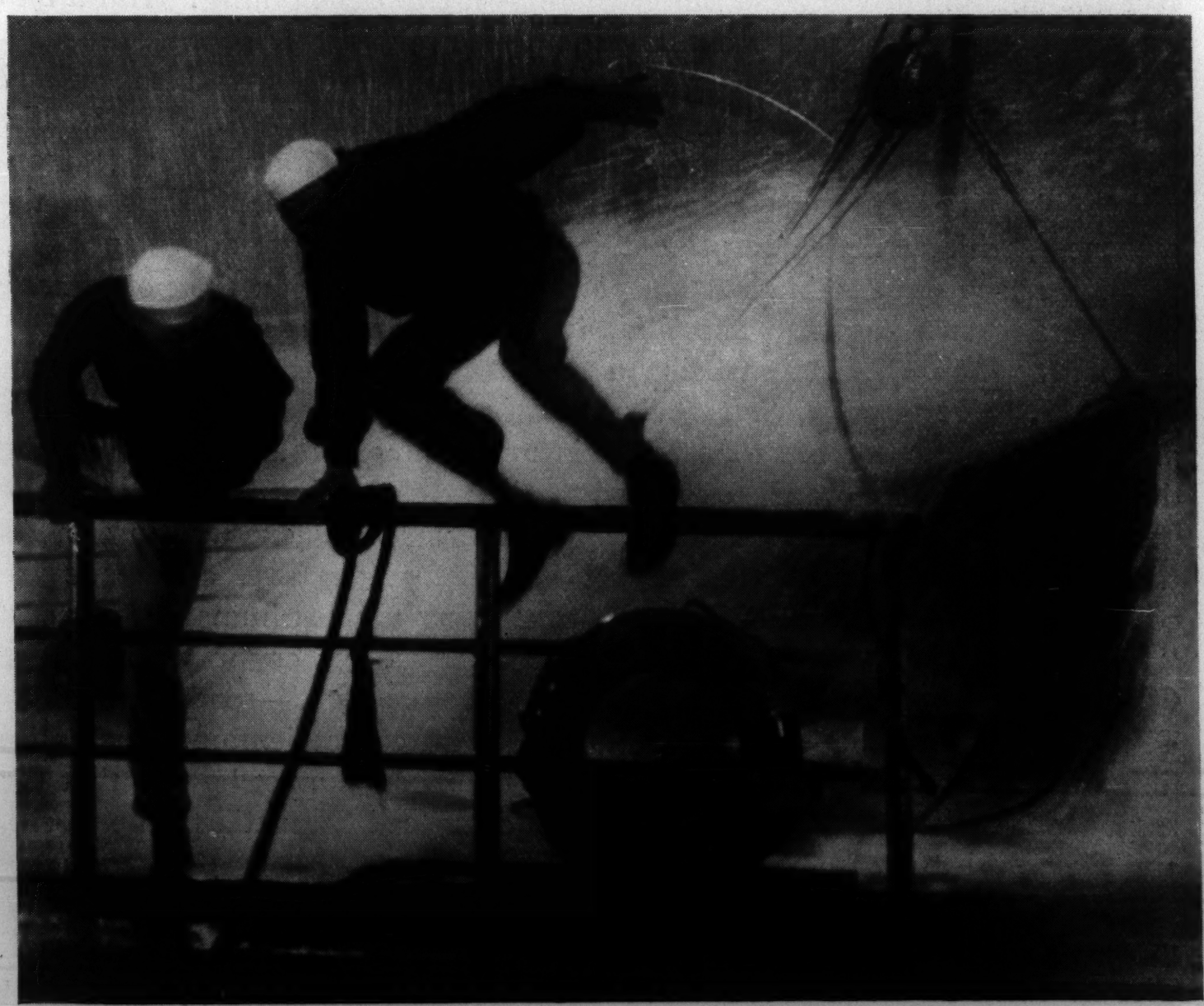
the motility of aesthetic inventions and tendencies, propagation, fruition—the fluid health. The future of the Soviet kino is guaranteed by a continuous feeding from the roots up. The state school of the cinema at Moscow—the only university in the world training directors, cameramen, actors, scenarists—draws its students from the entire Union. These are educated, more than trained. They study sociology, art, literature, foreign languages, science, history of the cinema, theory, practice. Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Nikitin—the great actor of *A Fragment of an Empire*—teach there. The fruit feeds the root, the root feeds the fruit. We have already seen here in America, the product of this school in the first film of a student: Ilya Trauberg's *China Express*.

Another guarantee of the future of the Soviet kino is its several centres. Hollywood persists as a vested interest miles away from the critical centre of America. The Soviet film accords with the cultural autonomy of the

" All Right, Captain ! " *A comedy of naval life directed by A. Ivanoff for the Sojuzkino studios at Leningrad.*

" A vos ordres, capitaine ! " *Une comédie d'action navale réalisée par A. Ivanoff pour les studio Sojuzkino à Leningrad.*

" Alles in Ordnung, Kapitan." *Ein Lustspiel über das Leben in der Marine geleitet von A. Ivanoff für das Sojuzkino atelier in Leningrad.*



various republics and peoples. Caucasian films, Georgian films, Armenian, Jewish, Ukrainian, Mongol . . from the areas of these films come the students of the cinema school and the new directors. There's Kalveridzé, a Georgian; another Georgian is Mikhail Kalatozov (schvilli), whose social training began as an economist and cinematic as a cameraman. Kalatzov has just made his first picture as a creator. I saw it before the last touches. Pearl Attashev has written to me that the film has received a first class pass from the censor.

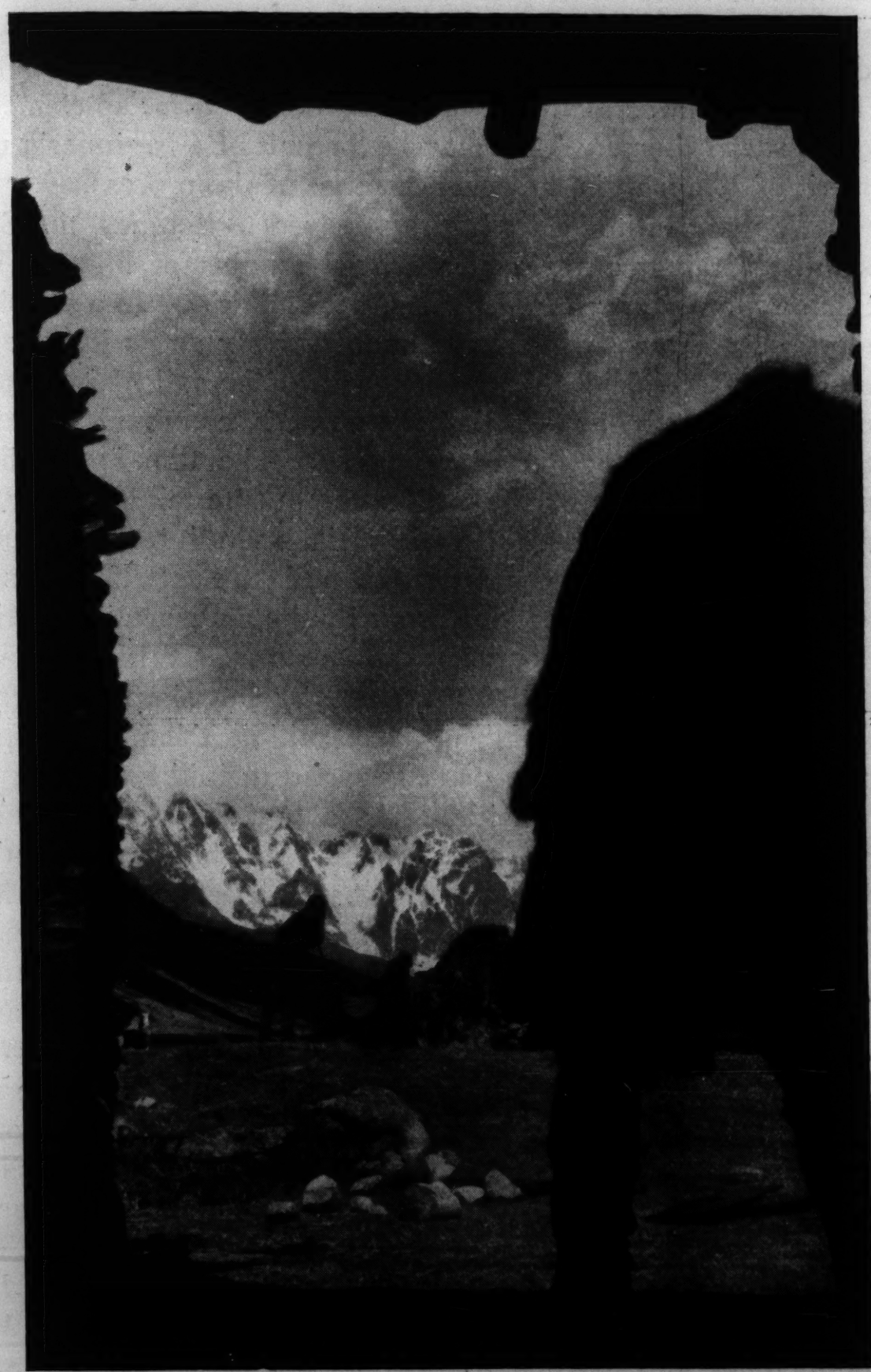
Salt of Swanetia is an ethnographic film. It presents a new approach to ethnographic material. The Soviet Union utilizes the film documenting the lives of its minority people as a call to action in their behalf. Swanetia is the salt-less land in Asiatic Russia. It is a land of darkness and malaria and blood hemorrhages, a land where "death is a holiday and birth a sorrow." Tretyakov, author of *Roar, China!*, prepared the original scenario for the film. Kalatzov went at it in his own way. The difference seems to be one of stress. Should Kalatzov have stressed the quotidienal facts, or was he right in having constructed an experience on peaks of pathos? The choice having been made, we can view its execution. The ethnographic film has had its literal, factual day, it seems to me. We have awaited a non-fabricated, yet dramatic, enactment of the life of remote people. Not a simple-minded and charming *Chang*—it exposes nothing. But a film satisfying the social sense, a film making demands upon the active conscience. The romanticized document like *Chang* concentrates a tale around a personality to the disadvantage of the evidences of native life. It is, like Flaherty's lovely lyrics, *Nanook* and *Moana*, too pleasant, too "open-minded." Kalatazov has uncovered the dramatic human heart of the evidences, without destroying the ethnographic value of the document.

Kalatazov has established his point-of-view at once in the bold image and stern grand angles. The film, in these, is related to Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, but being a film of immediate pathos, rather than one of objective tragedy, *Salt of Swanetia* is a structure of greater liquidity and darker, more sombre tones.. It is unrelenting in its exposure of the dread life of the Swans, exploited and hopeless, incarcerated by the mountains. The funeral of the tuberculosis victim is excruciating in its dire grief. The widow, dripping her milk into the grave, condemns the collusion of paganism and christianity conspiring against human happiness. "We will not give our milk to the grave," the women cry in revolt. The film calls, and we respond: "These people must be saved—roads and salt!" The last part shouting this slogan directly is a weak addendum—the entire film cries that convincingly enough. Yet perhaps we must be told that the response is acting, that a road is being built to lead Swanetia to the world, and the world to Swanetia.

Eisenstein has spoken of "the pathetic treatment of non-pathetic material." There is also the non-pathetic treatment of pathetic material. The question arises: shall pathos be stressed by pathetic treatment? I

think Kalatazov has answered that. If the pathetic treatment conveys more than sympathy, that is, evokes a positive conduct, and if that treatment informs the film from beginning to end, it is valid. Ordinarily it is sentimentality to treat pathos with pathos; it is over-treatment. But from the opening with the first mountain-peak to the beginning of the epilogue, Kalatazov's attitude is constant in the structure. Such conversion of an idea into a form is the full process and achievement of art.

A curious film is another first picture, *Rubicon,* also un-released as yet, by a young Jew from White Russia, Vladimir Weinstock. The film is



" Salt of Swanetia," a pathetic documentary by Kalatosoff for the Georgian Goskinprom. The film is remarkable for its excellent photography. Kalatosoff directed and photographed his film.

" Le sel de Swanetia," documentaire pathétique réalisé par Kalatosoff pour le Goskinprom de Géorgie. Ce film est remarquable pour la qualité de sa photographie. Kalatosoff en a lui-même assuré la prise de vue et la régie.

" Salz von Swanetia." Rührend, beglaubigt von Kalatosoff für Goskinprom von Georgia. Der Film is hervorragend durch seine ausgezeichnete Fotografie. Kalatosoff hat seinen Film geleitet und aufgenommên.

really two films. The first part relates of a British sailor who is blacklisted for striking an officer. He ships with a Soviet vessel and the pronounced contrast in fraternity and consideration for the seaman turns him to the workers' land, which he serves by catching a fellow Anglo-Saxon, a "foreign specialist," red-handed at sabotage. Evidently, the second half of the picture was effected to serve the moment at hand: the exposure of the sabotagers, subsidized by the marplot and England, "the man higher up."

The film with all its faults, induced by the shifting of photographic treatment and the double-narrative, is a very reputable debut. Reminiscent at first of the French pictorial film, it overcomes this association with the effete by the handsome firmness of its pictorial compositions and the validity of the character-types. The tradition is again educator: type is prototype. The film is imperfect, somewhat too detached for so elementary a statement of its social theme. This may be a result of a beginner's uncertainty. The merit of *Rubicon* is, however, a proof of the process.

While creating more highly evolved techniques, the Soviet kino understands that it must present a certain number of films of normal structure. Such a film is *Life in Full Swing,* with Nikitin. In a simple straightforward story of a shrewish husband, unobtrusively and with good folk-humour, a number of social ideals are conveyed. The evil of intemperance, the right of the woman to her own life, the nursery, community pride, the new architecture, the elimination of drudgery. The film is another of the genre-posters which, through the medium of an entertaining story, seek to establish a coincidence of personal with social morality. Humour is the sensible contact between subject-matter and audience. Self-criticism is the suggestive contact, which is carried away by the audience in positive conduct.

The Soviet kino neglects no medium. While the western world is titillated, gooseflesh and funnybone, by the simplistic scrawls and stereotype procedures of *Mickey Mouse,* calling them end-stops in the motion picture, the Soviet Union passes beyond insipid lycanthropy to an animated cartoon that contains an idea. As a first exercise in synchronisation, the Soviet kino presents an animation of Marshak's children's book, *Post,* a delightful story of a catapillar sent by mail around the world. The achievement is in the multiple character of the graphic, the lively sequence of images, the sportiveness, and the original integration of sound and image. As a first attempt, it already leaves *Mickey Mouse* in the cellar. The work of animation is Sehenovski's and the music—modern and varied—is by Dershenov. Words are incorporated as sound-music values in the musical compositions. The graphic is not simply crude line-drawings and dull wash, but an alternation of profile poster-illustrations, patterns in line, living images of humans as interludes, and even newsreel excerpts through the tourist's spectacles. The designs move in all directions, they alternate in diagonals, circles, as well as in the normal horizontals. *Post* matures the animated cartoon as a form, vindicating the charge that *Mickey Mouse* is rudimentary and inarticulate.

H. A. POTAMKIN.

FEATURE ARTICLE

AS IS

BY THE EDITOR.

In this time of world depression the cinema has been hard-hit. Like everything else, it quakes—sometimes more perceptibly than or in different ways from others. But all that has all this to it: world depression in the cinema need not unduly world-depress its followers, if depression means a disruption of the commercial formula. If the big vested interests weaken —if films seem even to " be killed "—that can well be the moment for the spread and popularisation of what each in his own way or in the way of his faith or ritual may choose to understand in the expression New Spirit.

The loggerhead tactics of opposing factions could and did produce only a dunderhead result—while paltriness and condonation of the rank were cardinal virtues of the Popular Screen, dear Lord—as though that were so fixedly the prize of the beastly little small-town tradesmen. But if cracks sneak in and out the cornices, and lay a gradual net of weakness in the name of world depression, the opportunity's there—yours or mine; somebody's anyway—to make the tottering structure valid to a modern world—the culture film, the intellectual film, the film of direct approach and certain impact. Hope for the cinema may come from its demise. The New Spirit will be this or that. We don't say Soviet any more when we talk about that. Though there alone is the urgency which makes stimulus to the thoughts you will carry round in your head—all day, and on any day—and there is a simple way of seeing a simple function of true cinema. A man will be thinking of life and his interest is presumably in it. Implying, of necessity, a *working out* of a problem—personal, impersonal, racial, universal, cosmic —if not of a problem, in any event a working out. Life is like that. It is the doing of this to get ready for the next thing, a shuffling and prevision, a readiness and an ambition. Of one sort or another. Cinema that deals with this—with the mental, the scientific, will come nearer to man's way of living, and so nearer to his interest and appreciation. In appreciation lies the secret of refinement toward—shall we say, for the moment, art? The Soviet directors alone—as a collective force—have recognised this, which is one of the sustaining principles of their " modernity." They take " the daily problem " to the cinema. So, in a rudimentary manner, did the domestic dramas. Even now a domestic drama with references to the social structure from which its complications rise, can be relevant. But quite early in the development of " screen art " references were discounted in favour of heavy insistence on the personal, the ubiquitous, the " I says to 'im and 'e says to me," philosophy of the—of the small town tradesman's wife, her tea-time chatter.

The Soviet directors were the first—or among the first—to break away from this cinematic amen. In other countries individual directors have done the same. Feyder, Dreyer, Pabst, Leitão de Barros, it would seem, in Portugal, J. Shige Sudzuki in Japan, René Clair and some of the independents. Antithetical to all this squats Hollywood, whose amen is to creeds of gold and gain. Creator, most certainly, of nothing, but possessor of the earth. Unless " world depression " really can do anything about it!

If the Soviet technique is no longer new, at all events it is the newest we have. But there is ground to be covered. The Soviet film is the election-hall film, and that, God knows, is important enough in man's mind. But elections, no matter how general, are not all " the currants in the bun." There are the sciences. There also is entertainment. In some real sense of the word. Not really the sorrows of a girl whose boy thinks she has sold her body to somebody else, and, by leaving her, leaves her no other alternative but to starve, which out of cussedness she does and that makes him believe her—but something which gladdens, not stultifies, the mind. Proving, for instance, the cussedness, rather than pretend in it essence of female chastity! Dear me, isn't it time for some such films? Essentially a film should be . . . should be *witty!* A " smashing indictment," Lord save us, isn't good enough. It only betrays the betrayer, like the kiss of Judas. People who want, who really want, smashingly to indict are bound to have indictible qualities themselves. Ridicule is a quick destroyer. We all know that. It isn't entirely a destructive thing. It is really an early stage of building, like many other carpings.

Films need to be carped at. Need an awfully firm hand. Need snobism. Need to be sneered at, that is to say, need standards of value, need slightly less bumptiousness and indifference on the part of those who make them and those who go to see them. For instance, we hear from America that " radio plays " are likely to kill films. That's not the first thing we have heard may kill them. Television may do so . . . you know all that! It may. So may radio plays. But nobody yet has made a film one half, one quarter as real as a moment from life—from standing, for example, anywhere in a street for five minutes and really using the eyes and ears. There is much better cinema all round us than may ever reach the screen. You might almost say that so far there have been NO films. Why then should they die? Why should they not just now, in the middle of trade depression, really begin?

The query may seem irrelevant. They cannot die. They cannot go on as they are. They will have to be changed. The public is not tired of films, but tired of stupefaction. Cinema must change and be thought of as stimulant, or stimulating dope. Not as narcotic and the pandering to brains turned off at the main. The brain turned off at the main is the brain that goes to the cinema. In time it grows tired of not working. Only fatigue need be recognised. Stimulant is what is needed. The thoughts men think. That is the secret of the art of films.

KENNETH MACPHERSON.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

NOTICE TO READERS AND CONTRIBUTORS.

We are anxious to help readers who require information, but before writing to us, please read the following paragraphs, as we cannot answer letters dealing with these subjects.

We are not allowed to sell photographs that have appeared in *Close Up*. Readers desirous of obtaining actual photographs should apply direct to the firms owning the films. The name of firm or director is printed usually underneath the picture. Addresses of film companies are to be found most easily in the Kinematographic Year Book. (Your local cinema will probably have a copy.)

We cannot recommend any reliable film school nor can we advise readers as to the best way of obtaining employment in a studio. There is the State School of cinematography in Moscow but it is very difficult for foreigners to enter it. Readers who wish to work in films are advised to perfect themselves as far as possible in some technical branch *before* trying to obtain a position.

We cannot advise as to whether names selected for fictitious film stars in stories written by readers, would involve the author in libel proceedings or not.

For particulars of The London Workers and affiliated Film Societies, apply to R. Bond, 5, Denmark Street, London, W.C.2. The address of the Film Society is 56, Manchester Street, London, W.C.1.

We read carefully all manuscripts sent to us. We cannot be responsible for them though we will endeavour to return those not suitable if a stamped self addressed envelope be enclosed. International postage stamps can be obtained at any post office. But we would like to point out, to obviate disappointment, that our space is restricted and that we have many reports to print supplied to us by our foreign correspondents. Therefore it is seldom possible to print more than one outside article in each issue. We do not wish to discourage authors and wish we had more space to print many of the excellent articles we receive. But before we can increase the number of our pages we must double the number of our readers.

Otherwise we will endeavour to answer all reasonable requests provided that a stamped, self addressed envelope be enclosed in the letter.

Address all mail to London Office.

The general interest in *The International Review of Educational Cinematography,* a monthly publication of the International Institute of Educational Cinematography, is increasing number by number because of the variety of the matter it treats and the accurate studies experts of undiscussed competency make on each subject.

Looking through the last three numbers we have received, we notice many articles worth while giving attention to.

In the December copy there are two articles, one by Mr. Albert Thomas, Director of the B.I.T., and the other by Professor Sante de Sanctis of the Institute of Experimental Psychology annexed to the University of Rome. These two articles are the preface and introduction to a study of considerable value which our Institute has published : *The Cinema in reference to Scientific Management of Labor.*

The same copy contains articles by Mr. Collette, the most notable personality of educational cinema, on : *Film Projection in Elementary Schools;* by E. W. Nack on : *Sidelights on the International Production of Fairytale Films;* by Mr. Moholy Nagy on : *The problem of modern cinematography: Its emancipation from painting;* and by Mr. James Corrie on : *Film propaganda on behalf of co-operation and agriculture in the Federated Malay States.* But the most important fact of the December is the first note of a new rubric which then began to appear, entitled *The Institute's Enquiries.* It contains the result of an enquiry conducted by the I.E.C., of Rome in schools of several countries and its questionnaires were filled by 200,000 scholars of different grades of instruction. The " Enquiries " are printed on special paper and are inserted in the Review so that they may be taken out if one wants to make a collection of them. December's enquiry was conducted on an interesting subject : *Cinema and visual fatigue.* In the following numbers the study will continue on the cinema in relation to corporal fatigue and mental fatigue.

In January's number the I.E.C. has also opened another rubric : *Studies and Enquiries* and there is a study entitled : *Children's responses to the Motion Picture: The Bagdad Thief,* by Mrs. Allen Abbott, made at *Horace Mann School, Teachers' College and at Columbia University.* This rubric, like the other : *The Institute's enquiries,* when detached, forms a distinct pamphlet.

We may also point out in January's copy *Motion Picture Education in Japan,* by Mr. Y. Mizuno; *Cinema and Theatre,* by Anton-Giulio Bragaglia ; *Sound Films and International Co-operation,* by Mr. E. v. Lölhöffel ; a quasi-fairytale, by Mrs. Eva Elie and various informative notes of high importance.

Very interesting in the February number is the scenario of *Æneas,* by Professor Fanciulli, of the University of Pisa, an article of Professor Cavaillon on : *Propaganda against venereal pictures, Censorship on pictures*

with educational purposes, by Mr. Duvillard, and *Cinema in reference to labor hygiene,* by Mr. Strube.

The I.E.C. furthermore publishes the most interesting facts about cinema gathered from all over the world. In last month's number for instance those who are interested in the question may find valuable information on censorship in Russia, Japan and Turkey.

Attention may also be called on the rubric *Echos and Comments* for the variety of subjects treated.

A Film Society has been formed at Oxford and four performances have been arranged for the present season. Among the films selected are *Potemkin,* directed by Eisenstein, *Uberfall* by Erno Metzner, and *Bed and Sofa* by Room. Other films by Murnau, Galeen, Germaine Dulac, etc., are included in the programme. The society is allowed only to show films, and not to make them. The president of the society is Mr. H. C. Greene and it is hoped that the society may extend its activities in course of time.

NEWS FROM HOLLAND.

Various members of the " avant garde " in Holland have been able to continue their work, having received several new contracts.

Upon his return from the trip to Russia, Joris Ivens resumed work on photographing the Zuider Zee, chiefly upon the drainage of a part of this area and the work on the reclaimed ground. The title of his film is *Neuer Boden,* (New Earth).

He is working also at an advertisement film for the Phillips Radio Works in Eindhoven, Holland. It is expected that both these films will be ready in the spring.

H. K. Franken is making an advertisement film for the van Houten Cocoa Works at Weesp. He has also plans for other pictures.

Willem Bon has finished recently his new film, *The Book,* for the association of Dutch publishers.

Jan Hin has finished a film showing the working of a Sanitorium and is now preparing a film for the association of Women Students at Rotterdam.

There being no sound film industry in Holland, the " avant garde " has not yet experimented with talkies, apart from Joris Ivens, who has made one or two trials during the working out of the Phillips Radio Film.

RECAPITULATION.

A number of portrait photographers, of prodigious reputation, would soon be forced to admit defeat if they were ever so foolish as to undertake to produce " artistic " close ups with a motion picture camera. Their work is not really photography for they spend hours with the lead pencil building up the faces of their models. In fact they go to the length of taking negatives which will supply a mere framework.

Those who complain about these deft practices are generally the jealous ones. After all, money, in immense quantities, can be made from the game : the sitters are so happy to find that a man can be persuaded, by any means, to say such flattering things about their faces. The mischief is done when these portrait painters begin to influence the younger photographers. For the sake of the rising generation we believe the wielders of the lead pencil should be denied the title of photographers and given that of artists !

Talented Moholy-Nagy is one of those who is a little weak on his technique. He has made films, but we have never seen them. However, we saw his work in *Malerie, Fotographie Film* and now in the first volume of the new *Fototek* series (Klinkhardt and Biermann, Berlin). He is good at pasteage and photograms, yet he hardly deserves the magnificent translations of the captions. . . " Geometrizing clairobscure strukture." " Photographic immediacy of the instant." " Dematerialised house." " Degrees of plasticity, of darkness and of abstraction." . . . Moholy-Nagy (with or without pencil) cannot compete with this superb translator of the original German. He faces a photo with its negative. He pastes (we like our word, pasteage) up long shots and close ups, adding a few lines to accentuate perspective. No : the translator IS the star of the book.

The second volume of the series is devoted to Aenne Biermann. Franz Roh contributes a long preface on *The Literary Dispute about Photography*. He reminds the reader that people objected to the photos of Daguerre as inventions of the devil (any ink to sling at photography) ! And he discusses the objection that, as photography has similarity to modern painting and sculpture, the camera worker REJECTS instead of FORMULATES.

Aenne Biermann believes in real photos. She attempts to make ordinary objects look interesting : a lobster claw, hot water bottles, broken egg with reflection. Like Moholy she faces a large eye open with a large eye shut. Nevertheless, she has technique. The agate magnified forty nine fold is changed (unlike apples on a plate) to interest by the lens of the camera. There is a nice double print of a piano and strings. There are : the possessive chimpanzee with his arm round the girl ; the conifer branch ; the man and woman lying on the beach. The translator is less obtrusive.

The make-up of both volumes is by Jan Tschichold.

Other books in the series will be " consecrated " to : El Lissitzky, Police Photos, Photomantage, Kitsch Photos, Sport Photos, Erotic and Sexual Photos.

Omnibus (a collection issued by Der Galerie Flechtheim, Berlin) is a merry jumble from Paul Klee to Maillol. Many film stills including Bunuel's *L'Age d'Or* and Renoir's *Die Jagd Nach Dem Glück.*

Band In Attendance. The photos and drawings from Beaton's *Book of Beauty* were exhibited at the Cooling Galleries. We have been told the tale of the man who always grunted when his own tea parties were going well. Alas, Cecil would be far too smart to do such a pretty thing. As models, my dear, The Marquise de Casa Maury, The Jungman Sisters, The Queen of Spain, the Beaton girls. . . One can enjoy the chic as well as the photos although the photos are chic. (Osbert Sitwell wrote an appreciation for the catalogue.) There is no reason why *à la mode* work should not be worthy of attention. It demands a feeling for fabrics, cloths, textures, pearls. It demands skill not to blurr the heads too much into the background. It calls for skill in painting on balloons or stars. It calls for a l—— p——.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

Do you give critics

three or four years to

catch up with *Borderline?*

The *Filmligia* of Holland has presented *Borderline.*

Spain is viewing *Borderline.*

After London, Glasgow.

Even if

they don't like *Borderline*

they seem

to want to see it.

Borderline

promotes

Discussion

Thought

AND (among the initiated)

ADMIRATION.

"He was one of the first to grasp the new principles of naval tactics, and to break away from the traditions of the old school."

THIS WAS SAID OF ADMIRAL RODNEY AFTER THE BATTLE OF CAPE ST. VINCENT.

WE ARE ON THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW EPOCH

The Old School is not always wrong, nor are the new tactics invariably right. But the Age must have its head, and it is the province of responsible papers to record the movements of the day, to encourage creative effort, to support reasonable experimental work, to mould the Future, while tactfully reminding the Present of the Past by a judicious display of its greatest works. There is no reason why progressive ideas should be monopolized by revolutionaries: older papers, like the older men, their roots well grounded in tradition, should be the strongest supporters, as well as the keenest critics, of the new movements.

THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW—the leading English magazine of architecture and decoration—is published monthly at the price of 2/6. Normally one or two special or double numbers are issued each year at an increased price of 5/- or more. These special numbers, in addition to the cost of postage, are included in the annual subscription rate of 25/-.

9, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE, WESTMINSTER, LONDON, S.W. 1.

CAPE FORLORN, ETC.

Cape Forlorn is proof that the cinema is not yet dead, it makes one wish to God it were. Before going to see it, one felt my God, Ian Hunter for Conrad Veidt. Afterwards one said, Thank God Conrad Veidt was not involved in the British side of the scandal.

The " heroine " of this B.I.P. procoction is Miss Fay Compton, who has had a somewhat lengthy career on the English stage, whither it is to be hoped she will return until her death or retirement. She will be more appreciated there, where the audiences appreciate the sort of thing she stands for. It is only just, however, to add that though her diction may have been taken directly from the stage, the inspiration for her gestures and expressions seems to have been derived from the screen—I allude to the incomparable performance of Miss Maria Jacobini in Gennaro Righelli's version of *La Bohème,* which it is safe to assume, served as a model for Miss Fay Compton's effort. It had hitherto stood in a class by itself.

The " hero " (Ian Hunter) is one of those clean-shaven Englishmen so fond of adventure (i.e. hunting (and shooting) tigers in India and shooting (without hunting) Indians in India). It turns out in this instance that he merely robbed an Australian building society.

The action takes place in a lighthouse, don't you know, and the sea appears at least twice. The action arises from the complications arising from the relations arising from there being two hefty young men about the place as well as the husband. One of them gets shot, but the really nice one, though he goes to clink for his building society activities, will soon get out (after the film is over), and come and see the heroine (all this after the film is over, fortunately).

Fragments of dialogue grow confused in my memory of the film, which will soon be obliterated. " He talks like a gentleman—and comes from a good family." " Your nice grey eyes—your hair—so fair and soft." (Fay to Ian.) " And that dog dared to TOUCH MY WIFE." " MISTER Kingsley from you, I think." " I don't understand." And so on.

It is full of coynesses and reticences which must puzzle any foreigner who does not appreciate the decency and restraint which never never desert an Englishman. (That is why there are no earthquakes in England. They would be quite inconsistent with the maintenance of the qualities mentioned).

Dupont is responsible for it, as for *Atlantic*.

The Regal booked it. In the same programme was *Sous les toits de Paris* (slightly cut), a musical interlude, *Britannia,* winding up with bars from *Rule Britannia* supplemented by the appearance of a revolting tableau vivant, the Regal News, a very large section of which was devoted to a singularly shameless militaristic display under pretext of rendering homage to Joffre (an excellent sketch of His career is to be found in the *Daily Worker* of January 5th, 1931) and Festival Russe (on the stage) which brought the house down, but was quite exhausted.

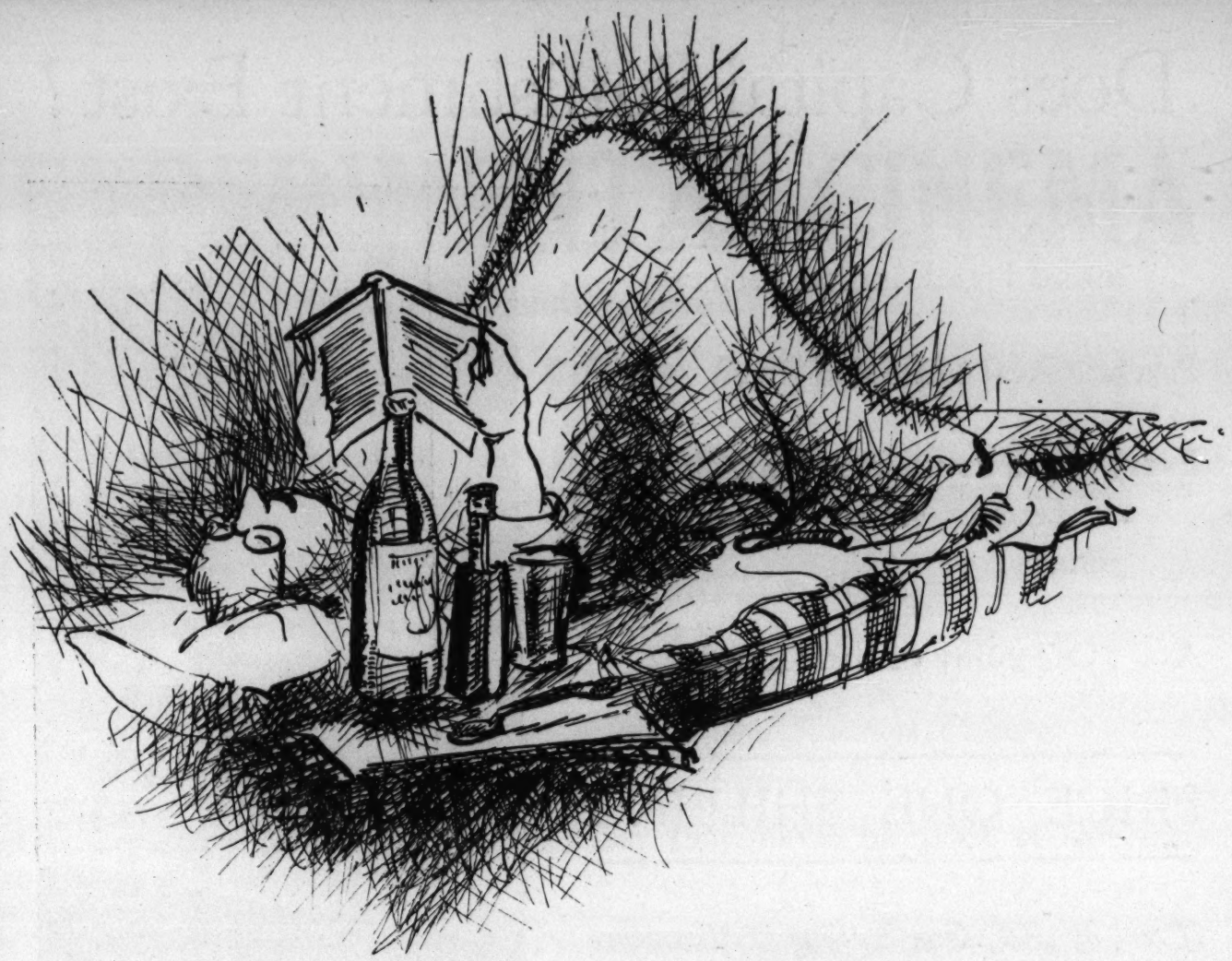
We are all tired, very tired of art in Heaven. H. A. M.

WHITE MAN'S NEGRO.

Africa Speaks: a Columbia picture.

Part of the " white man's burden " is documenting " darkest Africa." The documents are more often fake than genuine, and when genuine avoid those details of African life that expose the nature of the " burden." The best African film is that made by Léon Poirier for the expedition sent out by Citroen, the Henry Ford of France. The American contributions have been usually saturated with the unauthoritative, the supercilious, the patronizing, the wisecracking: the Martin Johnsons' *Simba*, Burbidge's *Gorilla Hunt*, and this *Africa Speaks*, made by what I suspect to have been the never-existing " Colorado African Expedition." This film I suspect to have been assembled from a few " shots "—a couple exciting, like the leaping impala and the locust plague—most of them no more revealing than a visit to the zoo. The opening farewell dinner to the two " explorers " is very evidently a staged affair with actors from the age before cold-cream. The " explorers " themselves explored Africa by the Dunning process. They were mounted into the film and superimposed upon the scenes. That is evident from the sharp distinction between scene and men. There is too much verbal showing-off with the camera, and too much innocence and pose of knowledge by the guys. These two are most offensive in their enacted authority toward the Negroes, whom they would never dare to treat so in the veldt. Their conduct is a commentary on " the white man's negro." Lions roar and the white men boldly face the beasts with their cameras. The Negroes dive into a case, and hide. The goateed white man remarks upon a Negro: " He is tired. Tired, l-a-z-y." There is a perpetrated scene where a lion devours the chief's son. It is all too plain, by the way the camera is set to alternate between lion and lad, and by the way the devouring is handled, and by the sober acting of the ham-explorers, that this is fake. If it were not, the whites would need to face the accusation that they deliberately sacrificed a Negro for their nordic art. The locust plague is exciting, but I doubt its complete veracity. The locusts, in their voracity, would not have spared the tent and supplies of the men: these were imposed upon the actual scene. And the actual, I daresay, was multiplied once or twice for effect. The sounds are not bad, but they are sounds taken in safe quarters. I do not complain of this, for such sounds may, on the receiving end, be truer than " on the spot " recordings. But the whole film reeks with Hail Columbia! picture bunkum. The truest thing about this show is its proof that movie fans do not need love-stories, narratives, stars to attract and hold their attention. That's something the U.S.A. cinema will not admit.

H. A. P.



Is a Cold in the Head Always a Tragedy

For those who like breakfast in bed it may be the road to a half forgotten paradise, while bus or train is legitimately missed and there is no need to dodge wheels in the fog, or rush to catch the afternoon mail. Isn't a sneezing fit a relief from the same faces, the same conversation, even the same lunch ?

Only at night when your chest is no longer sore and you feel you cannot sleep any longer, you get restless at cinema time and wish you were sitting in your usual seat, waiting for the lights to snap out and the other side of the world to blot responsibilities (shall I do this—ought I to do that) from the mind.

But you will have to catch the early bus in the morning if you are well enough to go out to-night.

If you cannot go to the movies let the cinema come to you. Why not read a cinematographic book, or what was happening to the films three years ago ? If you liked *Jeanne Ney* you will probably like *Gaunt Island*. If you liked *The End of St. Petersburg* why not try *Civilians* ? If you prefer . . . there is *Extra Passenger*. Or there are the bound volumes of *Close Up*.

What was happening in 1928, when talkies were not even on the horizon ? When did television begin to disquiet the market ? Or if your eyes feel too heavy to read why not turn over the photographs in *Close Up* or look at the stills published in *Film Problems* ?

Fight your cold with an interesting book and don't wait till you cannot go to the post box before ordering it.

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